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THE WORKS OF HANNAH MORE.

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IN SEVEN VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

PRACTICAL PIETY.—ON THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF ST. PAUL.

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PREFACE.

An eminent professor of our own time, modestly declared that he taught chemistry in order that he might learn it. The writer of the following pages might, with far more justice, offer a similar declaration, as an apology for so repeatedly treating on the important topics of religion and morals.

Abashed by the equitable precept, she is aware, how fairly she is putting it in the power of the reader, to ask, in the searching words of an eminent old prelate, "They that speak thus and advise thus, do they do thus?" She can defend herself in no other way, than by adopting for a reply the words of the same venerable divine, which immediately follow.—"O that it were not too true. Yet although it be but little that is attained, the very aim is right, and something there is that is done by it. It is better to have such thoughts and desires, than altogether to give them up; and the very desire, if it be serious and sincere, may so much change the habitude of the soul and life, that it is not to be despised."

The world does not require so much to be informed as reminded. A remembrancer may be almost as useful as an instructor; if his office be more humble, it is scarcely less necessary. The man whose employment it was, statedly to proclaim in the ear of Philip, Remember that thou art mortal, had his plain admonition been allowed to make its due impression, might have produced a more salutary effect on the royal usurper, than the impassioned orations of his immortal assailant—

whose resistless eloquence Shook th' arsenal, and fulminated over Greece, To Macedon and Artaxerxes' throne.

While the orator boldly strove to check the ambition, and arrest the injustice of the king, the simple herald barely reminded him, how short would be the reign of injustice, how inevitable and how near was the final period of ambition. Let it be remembered to the credit of the monarch, that while the thunders of the politician were intolerable, the monitor was of his own appointment.

This slight sketch, for it pretends to no higher name, aims only at being plain and practical. Contending solely for those indispensable points, which, by involving present duty, involve future happy—
ness, the writer has avoided, as far as Christian sincerity permits all controverted topics; has shunned whatever might lead to disputation rather than to profit.

We live in an age, when, as Mr. Pope observed of that in which he wrote, it is criminal to be moderate. Would it could not be said that religion has her parties as well as politics! Those who endeavor to steer clear of all extremes in either, are in danger of being reprobated by both. It is rather a hardship for persons, who having considered it as a Christian duty to cultivate a spirit of moderation in thinking, and of candor in judging, that, when these dispositions are brought into action, they frequently incur a harsher censure, than the errors which it was their chief aim to avoid.

Perhaps, therefore, to that human wisdom whose leading object is human applause, it might answer best to be exclusively attached to some one party. On the protection of that party at least, it might in that ease reckon; and it would then have the dislike of the opposite class alone to contend against; while those who cannot go all lengths with either, can hardly escape the disapprobation of both.

To apply the remark to the present case.—The author is comprehensive that she may be at once censured by opposite classes of readers, as being too strict, and too relaxed;—too much attached to opinions, and too indifferent about them;—as having narrowed the broad field of Christianity by laboring to establish its peculiar doctrines;—as having broken down its inclosures by not confining herself to doctrines exclusively;—as having considered morality of too little importance, as having raised it to an undue elevation;—as having made practice every thing; as having made it nothing.

While a Catholic spirit is accused of being latitudinarian in one party, it really is so in another. In one, it exhibits the character of Christianity on her own grand but correct scale; in the other, it is the offspring of that indifference, which, considering all opinions as of nearly the same value, indemnifies itself for tolerating all, by not attaching itself to any; which, establishing a self-complacent notion of general benevolence, with a view to discredit the narrow spirit of Christianity, and adopting a display of that cheap material, liberal sentiment, as opposed to religious strictness, sacrifices true piety to false candor.

Christianity may be said to suffer between two criminals, but it is difficult to determine by which she suffers most;—whether by that uncharitable bigotry which disguises her divine character, and speculatively adopts the fagot and the flames of inquisitorial intolerance; or by that indiscriminate candor, that conceding slackness, which, by stripping her of her appropriate attributes, reduces her to something scarcely worth contending for; to something which, instead of making her the religion of Christ, generalizes her into any religion which may choose to adopt her.—The one distorts her lovely lineaments into caricature, and throws her graceful figure into gloomy shadow; the other, by daubing her over with colors not her own, renders her form indistinct, and obliterates her fea-
tures. In the first instance, she excites little affection; in the latter, she is not recognised.

The writer has endeavored to address herself as a Christian who must die soon, to Christians who must die certainly. She trusts that she shall not be accused of erecting herself into a censor, but be considered as one who writes with a real consciousness that she is far from having reached the attainments she suggests; with a heartfelt conviction of the danger of holding out a standard too likely to discredit her own practice. She writes not with the assumption of superiority, but with a deep practical sense of the infirmities against which she has presumed to caution others. She wishes to be understood as speaking the language of sympathy, rather than of dictation; of feeling rather than of document. So far from fancying herself exempt from the evils on which she has animadverted, her very feeling of those evils has assisted her in their delineation. Thus this interior sentiment of her own deficiencies, which might be urged as a disqualification, has, she trusts, enabled her to point out dangers to others.—If the patient cannot lay down rules for the cure of a reigning disease, much less effect the cure; yet from the symptoms common to the same malady, he who labors under it may suggest the necessity of attending to it. He may treat the case feelingly, if not scientifically. He may substitute experience, in default of skill: he may insist on the value of the remedy he has neglected, as well as recommend that from which he has found benefit.

The subjects considered in these volumes have been animadverted on, have been in a manner exhausted, by persons before whose names the author bows down with the deepest humility; by able professional instructors, by piety adorned with all the graces of style, and invigorated with all the powers of argument.

Why then, it may be asked, multiply books which may rather incumber the reader than strengthen the cause?—“That the older is better” cannot be disputed. But is not the being “old” sometimes a reason why the being “better” is not regarded? Novelty itself is an attraction which but too often supersedes merit. A slighter drapery, if it be a new one, may excite a degree of attention to an object, not paid to it when clad in a richer garb to which the eye has been accustomed.

The author may begin to ask with one of her earliest and most enlightened friends*—“Where is the world into which we were born?” Death has broken most of those connections which made the honor and the happiness of her youthful days. Fresh links however have continued to attach her to society. She is singularly happy in the affectionate regard of a great number of amiable young persons, who may peruse, with additional attention, sentiments which come recommended to them by the warmth of their own attachment, more than by any claim of merit in the writer. Is there not something in personal knowledge, something in the feelings of endeared acquaintance, which, by that hidden association, whence so much of our undefined pleasure is derived, if it does not impart new force

* Dr. Johnson.
to old truths, may excite a new interest in considering truths which are known? Her concern for these engaging persons extends beyond the transient period of present intercourse. It would shed a ray of brightness on her parting hour, if she could hope that any caution here held out, any principle here suggested, any habit here recommended, might be of use to any one of them, when the hand which now guides the pen, can be no longer exerted in their service. This would be remembering their friend in a way which would evince the highest affection in them, which would confer the truest honor on herself.

Barley Wood, March 1st, 1811.
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PRACTICAL PIETY.

CHAP. I.

Christianity an Internal Principle.

Christianity bears all the marks of a divine original. It came down from heaven, and its gracious purpose is to carry us up thither. Its Author is God. It was foretold from the beginning by prophecies which grew clearer and brighter as they approached the period of their accomplishment. It was confirmed by miracles which continued till the religion they illustrated was established. It was ratified by the blood of its author. Its doctrines are pure, sublime, consistent. Its precepts just and holy. Its worship is spiritual. Its service reasonable, and rendered practicable by the offers of divine aid to human weakness. It is sanctioned by the promise of eternal happiness to the faithful, and the threat of everlasting misery to the disobedient. It had no collusion with power, for power sought to crush it. It could not be in any league with the world, for it set out by declaring itself the enemy of the world. It repudiated its maxims, it showed the vanity of its glories, the danger of its riches, the emptiness of its pleasures.

Christianity, though the most perfect rule of life that ever was devised, is far from being barely a rule of life. A religion consisting of a mere code of laws, might have sufficed for man in a state of innocence. But man who has broken these laws cannot be saved by a rule which he has violated. What consolation could he find in the perusal of statutes, every one of which, bringing a fresh conviction of his guilt, brings a fresh assurance of his condemnation. The chief object of the Gospel is not to furnish rules for the preservation of innocence, but to hold

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out the means of salvation to the guilty. It does not proceed upon a supposition, but a fact; not upon what might have suited man in a state of purity, but upon what is suitable to him in the exigencies of his fallen state.

This religion does not consist in an external conformity to practices which, though right in themselves, may be adopted from human motives, and to answer secular purposes. It is not a religion of forms, and modes, and decencies. It is being transformed into the image of God. It is being like-minded with Christ. It is considering him as our sanctification, as well as our redemption. It is endeavoring to live to him hereafter that we may live with him hereafter. It is desiring earnestly to surrender our will to his, our heart to the conduct of his spirit, our life to the guidance of his word.

The change in the human heart, which the Scriptures declare to be necessary, they represent to be not so much an old principle improved, as a new one created; not educated out of the former character, but infused into the new one. This change is there expressed in great varieties of language, and under different figures of speech. Its being so frequently described, or figuratively intimated in almost every part of the volume of inspiration, entitles the doctrine itself to reverence, and ought to shield from obloquy the obnoxious terms in which it is sometimes conveyed.

The sacred writings frequently point out the analogy between natural and spiritual things. The same spirit which in the creation of the world moved upon the face of the waters, operates on the human character to produce a new heart and a new life. By this operation the affections and faculties of the man receive a new impulse—his dark understanding is illuminated, his rebellious will is subdued, his irregular desires are rectified; his judgment is informed, his imagination is chastised, his inclinations are sanctified; his hopes and fears are directed to their true and adequate end. Heaven becomes the object of his hopes, an eternal separation from God the object of his fears. His love of the world is transmuted into the love of God. The lower faculties are pressed into the new service. The senses have a higher direction. The whole internal frame and constitution receive a nobler bent; the intents and purposes of the mind a sublimer aim; his aspirations a loftier flight; his vacillating desires find a fixed object; his vagrant purposes a settled home; his disappointed heart a certain refuge.
That heart, no longer the worshipper of the world, is struggling to become its conqueror. Our blessed Redeemer, in overcoming the world, bequeathed us his command to overcome it also; but as he did not give the command without the example, so he did not give the example without the offer of a power to obey the command.

Genuine religion demands not merely an external profession of our allegiance to God, but an inward devotedness of ourselves to his service. It is not a recognition, but a dedication. It puts the Christian into a new state of things, a new condition of being. It raises him above the world while he lives in it. It dispenses the illusions of sense, by opening his eyes to realities in the place of those shadows which he has been pursuing. It presents this world as a scene whose original beauty Sin has darkened and disordered, Man as a helpless and dependent creature, Jesus Christ as the repairer of all the evils which sin has caused, and as our restorer to holiness and happiness. Any religion short of this, any, at least, which has not this for its end and object, is not that religion which the Gospel has presented to us, which our Redeemer came down on earth to teach us by his precepts, to illustrate by his example, to confirm by his death, and to consummate by his resurrection.

If Christianity do not always produce these happy effects to the extent here represented, it has always a tendency to produce them. If we do not see the progress to be such as the Gospel annexes to the transforming power of true religion, it is not owing to any defect in the principle, but to the remains of sin in the heart; to the imperfectly subdued corruptions of the Christian. Those who are very sincere are still very imperfect. They evidence their sincerity by acknowledging the lowness of their attainments, by lamenting the remainder of their corruptions. Many an humble Christian whom the world reproaches with being extravagant in his zeal, whom it ridicules for being enthusiastic in his aims, and rigid in his practice, is inwardly mourning on the very contrary ground. He would bear their censure more cheerfully, but that he feels his danger lies in the opposite direction. He is secretly abasing himself before his Maker for not carrying far enough that principle which he is accused of carrying too far. The fault which others find in him is excess. The fault he finds in himself is deficiency. He is, alas! too commonly right. His enemies speak of him as they hear
He judges of himself as he feels. But, though humbled to the dust by the deep sense of his own unworthiness, he is "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." "He has," says the venerable Hooker, "a Shepherd full of kindness, full of care, and full of power." His prayer is not for reward but pardon. His plea is not merit but mercy; but then it is mercy made sure to him by the promise of the Almighty to penitent believers.

The mistake of many in religion appears to be, that they do not begin with the beginning. They do not lay their foundation in the persuasion that man is by nature in a state of alienation from God. They consider him rather as an imperfect than as a fallen creature. They allow that he requires to be improved, but deny that he requires a thorough renovation of heart.

But genuine Christianity can never be grafted on any other stock than the apostasy of man. The design to reinstate beings who have not fallen; to propose a restoration without a previous loss, a cure where there was no radical disease, is altogether an incongruity which would seem too palpable to require confutation, did we not so frequently see the doctrine of redemption maintained by those who deny that man was in a state to require such a redemption. But would Christ have been sent "to preach deliverance to the captive," if there had been no captivity; and "the opening of the prison to them that were bound," had there been no prison, had man been in no bondage?

We are aware that many consider the doctrine in question as a bold charge against our Creator. But may we not venture to ask, Is it not a bolder charge against God's goodness to presume that he had made beings originally wicked, and against God's veracity to believe, that having made such beings, he pronounced them "good?" Is not that doctrine more reasonable which is expressed or implied in every part of Scripture, that the moral corruption of our first parent has been entailed on his whole posterity; that from this corruption (though only punishable for their actual offences) they are no more exempt than from natural death?

We must not, however, think falsely of our nature; we must humble but not degrade it. Our original brightness is obscured, but not extinguished. If we consider ourselves in our natural state, our estimation cannot be too low: when we reflect at what a price we have been bought, we can hardly over-rate ourselves in the view of immortality.
If, indeed, the Almighty had left us to the consequences of our natural state, we might, with more color of reason, have mutinied against his justice. But when we see how graciously he has turned our very lapse into an occasion of improving our condition; how from this evil he was pleased to advance us to a greater good than we had lost; how that life which was forfeited may be restored; how by grafting the redemption of man on the very circumstance of his fall, he has raised him to the capacity of a higher condition than that which he has forfeited, and to a happiness superior to that from which he fell—What an impression does this give us of the immeasurable wisdom and goodness of God, of the unsearchable riches of Christ.

The religion which it is the object of these pages to recommend, has been sometimes misunderstood, and not seldom misrepresented. It has been described as an unproductive theory, and ridiculed as a fanciful extravagance. For the sake of distinction it is here called, The Religion of the heart. There it subsists as the fountain of spiritual life; thence it sends forth, as from the central seat of its existence, supplies of life and warmth through the whole frame: there is the soul of virtue, there is the vital principle which animates the whole being of a Christian.

This religion has been the support and consolation of the pious believer in all ages of the Church. That it has been perverted both by the cloistered and the un-cloistered mystic, not merely to promote abstraction of mind, but inactivity of life, makes nothing against the principle itself. What doctrine of the New Testament has not been made to speak the language of its injudicious advocate, and turned into arms against some other doctrine which it was never meant to oppose?

But if it has been carried to a blamable excess by the pious error of holy men, it has also been adopted by the less innocent fanatic, and abused to the most pernicious purposes. His extravagance has furnished to the enemies of internal religion, arguments, or rather invectives, against the sound and sober exercises of genuine piety. They seize every occasion to represent it as if it were criminal, as the foe of morality; ridiculous as the infallible test of an unsound mind; mischievous, as hostile to active virtue, and destructive as the bane of public utility.

But if these charges be really well founded, then were the brightest luminaries of the Christian Church—then were Horne, and Porteus, and Beveridge; then were Hook-
er, and Taylor, and Herbert; Hopkins, Leighton, and Usher; Howe, and Baxter, Ridley, Jewel, and Hooper;—then were Chrysostom and Augustin, the Reformers and the Fathers; then were the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, then were the noble army of Martyrs, then were the glorious company of the Apostles, then was the Disciple whom Jesus loved, then was Jesus himself—I shudder at the implication—dry speculatists, frantic enthusiasts, enemies to virtue, and subverters of the public weal.

Those who disbelieve, or deride, or reject this inward religion, are much to be compassionated. Their belief that no such principle exists, will, it is to be feared, effectually prevent its existing in themselves, at least, while they make their own state the measure of their general judgment. Not being sensible of the required dispositions, in their own hearts, they establish this as a proof of its impossibility in all cases. This persuasion, as long as they maintain it, will assuredly exclude the reception of divine truth. What they assert can be true in no case, cannot be true in their own. Their hearts will be barred against any influence in the power of which they do not believe. They will not desire it, they will not pray for it, except in the Liturgy, where it is the decided language: They will not addict themselves to those pious exercises to which it invites them, exercises which it ever loves and cherishes. Thus they expect the end, but avoid the way which leads to it; they indulge the hope of glory, while they neglect or pervert the means of Grace. But let not the formal religionist, who has, probably, never sought, and, therefore, never obtained, any sense of the spiritual mercies of God, conclude that there is, therefore, no such state. His having no conception of it is no more proof that no such state exists, than it is a proof that the cheering beams of a genial climate have no existence, because the inhabitants of the frozen zone have never felt them.

Where our own heart and experience do not illustrate these truths practically, so as to afford us some evidence of their reality, let us examine our minds, and faithfully follow up our convictions; let us inquire whether God has really been wanting in the accomplishment of his promises, or whether we have not been sadly deficient in yielding to those suggestions of conscience which are the motions of his spirit? Whether we have not neglected to implore the aids of that Spirit; whether we have not, in various instances, resisted them? Let us ask ourselves—have we looked
up to our Heavenly Father with humble dependence for the supplies of his grace? or have we prayed for these blessings only as a form, and having acquitted ourselves of the form, do we continue to live as if we had not so prayed? Having repeatedly implored his direction, do we endeavor to submit ourselves to its guidance? Having prayed that his will may be done, do we never stoutly set up our own will in contradiction to his?

If, then, we receive not the promised support and comfort, the failure must rest somewhere. It lies between him who has promised, and him to whom the promise is made. There is no other alternative; would it not be blasphemy to transfer the failure to God? Let us not, then, rest, till we have cleared up the difficulty. The spirits sink, and the faith fails, if, after a continued round of reading and prayer; after having, for years, conformed to the letter of the command; after having scrupulously brought in our tale of outward duties; we find ourselves just where we were at setting out.

We complain justly of our own weakness, and truly plead our inability as a reason why we cannot serve God as we ought. This infirmity, its nature, and its measure, God knows far more exactly than we know it; yet he knows that, with the help which he offers us, we can both love and obey him, or he never would have made it the qualification of our obtaining his favor. He never would have said "give me thy heart"—"seek ye my face"—add to your faith virtue?—"have a right heart and a right spirit"—"strengthen the things that remain"—"ye will not come to me that ye might have life"—had not all these precepts a definite meaning, had not all these been practicable duties.

Can we suppose that the omniscient God would have given these unqualified commands to powerless, incapable, unimpressible beings? Can we suppose that he would paralyse his creatures, and then condemn them for not being able to move? He knows, it is true, our natural impotence, but he knows, because he confers, our superinduced strength. There is scarcely a command in the whole Scripture which has not either immediately, or in some other part, a corresponding prayer, and a corresponding promise. If it says in one place "get thee a new heart"—it says in another "a new heart will I give thee;"—and in a third "make me a clean heart?" For it is worth observing that a diligent inquirer may trace every
where this threefold union. If God *commands* by Saint Paul "let not sin reign in your mortal body," he *promises* by the same Apostle "Sin shall *not* have dominion over you;"—while, to complete the tripartite agreement, he makes David *pray* that his "sins may not have dominion over him."

The saints of old, so far from setting up on the stock of their own independent virtue, seem to have had no idea of any light but what was imparted, of any strength but what was communicated to them from above.—Hear their impor-
tunate petitions!—"O send forth thy light and thy truth!"—Mark their grateful declarations!—"the Lord is my strength and my salvation!"—Observe their cordial ac-
knowledgements!—"bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name."

Though we must be careful not to mistake for the divine Agency those impulses which pretend to operate indepen-
dently of external revelation; which have little reference to it; which set themselves above it; it is however that powerful agency which sanctifies all means, renders all external revelation effectual.—Notwithstanding that all the truths of religion, all the doctrines of salvation are con-
tained in the holy scriptures, these very scriptures require the influence of that spirit which dictated them to produce an influential faith. This Spirit, by enlightening the mind, converts the rational persuasion, brings the intellectual conviction of divine truth conveyed in the New Testament, into an operative principle. A man, from reading, exam-
ing, and inquiring, may attain to such a reasonable assurance of the truth of revelation as will remove all doubts from his own mind, and even enable him to refute the objections of others; but this bare intellectual faith alone will not operate against his corrupt affections, will not cure his besetting sin, will not conquer his rebellious will, and may not therefore be an efficacious principle. A mere historical faith, the mere evidence of facts with the soundest reasonings, and deductions from them, may not be that faith which will fill him with all joy and peace in believing.

An habitual reference to that Spirit which animates the real Christian is so far from excluding, that it strengthens the truth of revelation, but never contradicts it. The word of God is always in unison with his spirit. His spirit is never in opposition to his word. Indeed, that this influence is not an imaginary thing, is confirmed by the whole tenor
of Scripture. We are aware that we are treading on dangerous, because disputed ground; for among the fashionable curtailments of scripture doctrines, there is not one truth which has been lopped from the modern creed with a more unsparing hand; not one, the defence of which excites more suspicion against its advocates. But if it had been a mere phantom, should we with such jealous iteration, have been cautioned against neglecting or opposing it? If the Holy Spirit could not be "grieved," might not be "quenched," were not likely to be "resisted;" that very spirit which proclaimed the prohibitions would never have said "grieve not," "quench not," "resist not." The Bible never warns us against imaginary evil, nor courts us to imaginary good. If then we refuse to yield to its guidance, if we reject its directions, if we submit not to its gentle persuasions, for such they are, and not arbitrary compulsions, we shall never attain to that peace and liberty which are the privilege, the promised reward of sincere Christians.

In speaking of that peace which passeth understanding, we allude not to those illuminations and raptures, which, if God has in some instances bestowed them, he has no where pledged himself to bestow; but of that rational yet elevated hope which flows from an assured persuasion of the paternal love of our heavenly Father; of that "secret of the Lord," which he himself has assured us, "is with them that fear him;" of that life and power of religion which are the privilege of those "who abide under the shadow of the Almighty;" of those who "know in whom they have believed;" of those "who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit;" of those "who endure as seeing him who is invisible."

Many faults may be committed where there is nevertheless a sincere desire to please God. Many infirmities are consistent with a cordial love of our Redeemer. Faith may be sincere where it is not strong. But he who can conscientiously say that he seeks the favor of God above every earthly good; that he delights in his service incomparably more than in any other gratification; that to obey him here and to enjoy his presence hereafter is the prevailing desire of his heart; that his chief sorrow is that he loves him no more and serves him no better, such a man requires no evidence that his heart is changed, and his sins forgiven.

For the happiness of a Christian does not consist in mere feelings which may deceive, nor in frames which can be
only occasional; but in a settled, calm conviction that God and eternal things have the predominance in his heart; in a clear perception that they have, though with much alloy of infirmity, the supreme, if not undisturbed possession of his mind; in an experimental persuasion that his chief remaining sorrow is, that he does not surrender himself with so complete an acquiescence as he ought to his convictions. These abatements, though sufficient to keep us humble, are not powerful enough to make us unhappy.

The true measure then to be taken of our state is from a perceptible change in our desires, tastes, and pleasures; from a sense of progress, however small, in holiness of heart and life. This seems to be the safest rule of judging, for if mere feelings were allowed to be the criterion, the presumptuous would be inflated with spiritual pride from the persuasion of enjoying them; while the humble, from their very humility, might be as unreasonably depressed at wanting such evidences.

The recognition of this divine aid then, involves no presumption, raises no illusion, causes no inflation; it is sober in its principle and rational in its exercise. In establishing the law of God it does not reverse the law of Nature, for it leaves us in full possession of those natural faculties which improve and sanctify; and so far from inflaming the imagination, its proper tendency is to subdue and regulate it.

A security which outruns our attainments is a most dangerous state, yet it is a state most unwisely coveted. The probable way to be safe hereafter, is not to be presumptuous now. If God graciously vouchsafe us inward consolation, it is only to animate us to farther progress. It is given us for support in our way, and not for a settled maintenance in our present condition. If the promises are our aliment, the commandments are our work; and a temperate Christian ought to desire nourishment only in order to carry him through his business. If he so supinely rest on the one as to grow sensual and indolent, he might become not only unwilling but incapacitated for the performance of the other. We must not expect to live upon cordials, which only serve to inflame without strengthening. Even without these supports, which we are more ready to desire than to put ourselves in the way to obtain, there is an inward peace in an humble trust in God, and in a simple reliance on his word; there is a repose of spirit, a freedom from solicitude in a lowly confidence in him, for which the world has nothing to give in exchange.
On the whole, then, the state which we have been describing, is not the dream of the Enthusiast; it is not the reverie of the Visionary, who renounces prescribed duties for fanciful speculations, and embraces shadows for realities; but it is that sober earnest of Heaven, that reasonable anticipation of eternal felicity, which God is graciously pleased to grant, not partially, nor arbitrarily, but to all who diligently seek his face, to all to whom his service is freedom, his will a law, his word a delight, his Spirit a guide; to all who love him unfeignedly, to all who devote themselves to him unreservedly, to all who with deep self-abasement, yet with filial confidence, prostrate themselves at the foot of his Throne, saying, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us and we shall be safe.
CHRISTIANITY

CHAP. II.

Christianity a Practical Principle.

If God be the Author of our spiritual life, the root from which we derive the vital principle, with daily supplies to maintain this vitality; then the best evidence we can give that we have received something of this principle, is an unreserved dedication of ourselves to the actual promotion of his glory. No man ought to flatter himself that he is in the favor of God, whose life is not consecrated to the service of God. Will it not be the only unequivocal proof of such a consecration, that he be more zealous of good works than those who, disallowing the principle on which he performs them, do not even pretend to be actuated by any such motive?

The finest theory never yet carried any man to Heaven. A religion of notions which occupies the mind, without filling the heart, may obstruct, but cannot advance the salvation of men. If these notions are false, they are most pernicious; if true and not operative, they aggravate guilt; if unimportant though not unjust, they occupy the place which belongs to nobler objects, and sink the mind below its proper level; substituting the things which only ought not to be left undone, in the place of those which ought to be done; and causing the grand essentials not to be done at all. Such a religion is not that which Christ came to teach mankind.

All the doctrines of the Gospel are practical principles. The word of God was not written, the Son of God was not incarnate, the Spirit of God was not given, only that Christians might obtain right views, and possess just notions. Religion is something more than mere correctness of intellect, justness of conception, and exactness of judgment. It is a life-giving principle. It must be infused into the habit, as well as govern in the understanding; it must regulate the will as well as direct the creed. It must not only cast the opinions into a new frame, but the heart into a new mould. It is a transforming as well as a penetrating principle. It changes the tastes, gives activity to the inclinations, and, together with a new heart, produces a new life.
Christianity enjoins the same temper, the same spirit, the same dispositions, on all its real professors. The act, the performance, must depend on circumstances which do not depend on us. The power of doing good is withheld from many, from whom, however, the reward will not be withheld. If the external act constituted the whole value of Christian virtue, then must the Author of all good be himself the Author of injustice, by putting it out of the power of multitudes to fulfil his own commands. In principles, in tempers, in fervent desires, in holy endeavors, consist the very essence of Christian duty.

Nor must we fondly attach ourselves to the practice of some particular virtue, or value ourselves exclusively on some favorite quality; nor must we wrap ourselves up in the performance of some individual actions, as if they formed the sum of Christian duty. But we must embrace the whole law of God in all its aspects, bearings, and relations. We must bring no fancies, no partialities, no prejudices, no exclusive choice or rejection, into our religion, but take it as we find it, and obey it as we receive it, as it is exhibited in the Bible, without addition, curtailment, or adulteration.

Nor must we pronounce on a character by a single action really bad, or apparently good; if so, Peter’s denial would render him the object of our execration, while we should have judged favorably of the prudent economy of Judas. The catastrophe of the latter, who does not know? while the other became a glorious martyr to that Master whom, in a moment of infirmity, he had denied.

A piety altogether spiritual, disconnected with all outward circumstances; a religion of pure meditation, and abstracted devotion, was not made for so compound, so imperfect a creature as man. There have, indeed, been a few sublime spirits, not "touch’d but rapt," who, totally cut off from the world, seem almost to have literally soared above this terrene region; who almost appear to have stolen the fire of the Seraphim, and to have had no business on earth, but to keep alive the celestial flame. They would, however, have approximated more nearly to the example of their divine Master, the great standard and only perfect model, had they combined a more diligent discharge of the active duties and beneficences of life with their high devotional attainments.

But while we are in little danger of imitating, let us not too harshly censure the pious error of these sublimated
spirits. Their number is small. Their example is not
catching. Their ethereal fire is not likely, by spreading,
to inflame the world. The world will take due care not
to come in contact with it, while its distant light and
warmth may cast, accidentally, a not unuseful ray on the
cold-hearted and the worldly.

But from this small number of refined but inoperative
beings, we do not intend to draw our notions of practical
piety. God did not make a religion for these few excep-
tions to the general state of the world, but for the world at
large; for beings active, busy, restless; whose activity
he, by his word, diverts into its proper channels; whose
busy spirit is there directed to the common good; whose
restlessness, indicating the unsatisfactoriness of all they
find on earth, he points to a higher destination. Were
total seclusion and abstraction designed to have been the
general state of the world, God would have given man
other laws, other rules, other faculties, and other employ-
ments.

There is a class of visionary, but pious writers, who
seem to shoot as far beyond the mark, as mere moralists
fall short of it. Men of low views and gross minds may
be said to be wise below what is written, while those of too
subtle refinement are wise above it. The one grovel in
the dust from the inertness of their intellectual faculties;
while the others are lost in the clouds by stretching them
beyond their appointed limits. The one build spiritual
castles in the air, instead of erecting them on the "holy
ground" of Scripture; the other lay their foundation in
the sand instead of resting it on the rock of ages. Thus,
the superstructure of both is equally unsound.

God is the fountain from which all the streams of good-
ness flow; the centre from which all the rays of blessed-
ness diverge. All our actions are, therefore, only good,
as they have a reference to Him: the streams must revert
back to their fountain, the rays must converge again to
their centre.

If love of God be the governing principle, this powerful
spring will actuate all the movements of the rational ma-
chine. The essence of religion does not so much consist
in actions as affections. Though right actions, therefore,
as from an excess of courtesy they are commonly termed,
may be performed where there are no right affections; yet
are they a mere carcase, utterly destitute of the soul, and,
therefore, of the substance of virtue. But neither can af-
fections substantially and truly subsist without producing right actions; for never let it be forgotten that a pious inclination which has not life and vigor sufficient to ripen into act when the occasion presents itself, and a right action which does not grow out of a sound principle, will neither of them have any place in the account of real goodness. A good inclination will be contrary to sin, but a mere inclination will not subdue sin.

The love of God, as it is the source of every right action and feeling, so it is the only principle which necessarily involves the love of our fellow creatures. As man we do not love man. There is a love of partiality, but not of benevolence; of sensibility but not of philanthropy; of friends and favorites, of parties and societies, but not of man collectively. It is true we may, and do, without this principle, relieve his distresses, but we do not bear with his faults. We may promote his fortune, but we do not forgive his offences; above all, we are not anxious for his immortal interests. We could not see him want without pain, but we can see him sin without emotion. We could not hear of a beggar perishing at our door without horror, but we can, without concern, witness an acquaintance dying without repentance. Is it not strange that we must participate something of the divine nature, before we can really love the human? It seems, indeed, to be an insensibility to sin, rather than want of benevolence to mankind, that makes us naturally pity their temporal and be careless of their spiritual wants; but does not this very insensibility proceed from the want of love to God?

As it is the habitual frame, and predominating disposition, which are the true measure of virtue, incidental good actions are no certain criterion of the state of the heart; for who is there, who does not occasionally do them? Having made some progress in attaining this disposition, we must not sit down satisfied with propensities and inclinations to virtuous actions, while we rest short of their actual exercise. If the principle be that of sound Christianity, it will never be inert. While we shall never do good with any great effect, till we labor to be conformed, in some measure, to the image of God; we shall best evince our having obtained something of that conformity, by a course of steady and active obedience to God.

Every individual should bear in mind, that he is sent into this world to act a part in it. And though one may have a more splendid, and another a more obscure part
assigned him, yet the actor of each is equally, is awfully accountable. Though God is not a hard, he is an exact Master. His service, though not a severe, is a reasonable service. He accurately proportions his requisitions to his gifts. If he does not expect that one talent should be as productive as five, yet to even a single talent a proportionable responsibility is annexed.

He who has said "Give me thy heart," will not be satisfied with less; he will not accept the praying lips, nor the mere hand of charity, as substitutes.

A real Christian will be more just, sober, and charitable than other men, though he will not rest for salvation on justice, sobriety, or charity. He will perform the duties they enjoin, in the spirit of Christianity, as instances of devout obedience, as evidences of a heart devoted to God.

All virtues, it cannot be too often repeated, are sanctified or unhallowed according to the principle which dictates them; and will be accepted or rejected accordingly. This principle, kept in due exercise, becomes a habit, and every act strengthens the inclination, adding vigor to the principle and pleasure to the performance.

We cannot be said to be real Christians, till religion become our animating motive, our predominating principle and pursuit, as much as worldly things are the predominating motive, principle, and pursuit of worldly men.

New converts, it is said, are most zealous, but they are not always the most persevering. If their tempers are warm, and they have only been touched on the side of their passions, they start eagerly, march rapidly, and are full of confidence in their own strength. They too often judge others with little charity, and themselves with little humility. While they accuse those who move steadily of standing still, they fancy their own course will never be slackened. If their conversion be not solid, religion, in losing its novelty, loses it power. Their speed declines. Nay it will be happy if their motion become not retrograde. Those who are truly sincere, will commonly be persevering. If their speed is less eager, it is more steady. As they know their own heart more, they discover its deceitfulness, and learn to distrust themselves. As they become more humble in spirit they become more charitable in judging. As they grow more firm in principle they grow more exact in conduct.

The rooted habits of a religious life may indeed lose their prominence because they are become more indented.
If they are not embossed, it is because they are burnt in. Where there is uniformity and consistency in the whole character, there will be little relief in an individual action. A good deed will be less striking in an established Christian than a deed less good in one who had been previously careless; good actions being his expected duty and his ordinary practice. Such a Christian indeed, when his right habits cease to be new and striking, may fear that he is declining: but his quiet and confirmed course is a surer evidence than the more early starts of charity, or fits of piety, which may have drawn more attention and obtained more applause.

Again; We should cultivate most assiduously, because the work is most difficult, those graces which are most opposite to our natural temper; the value of our good qualities depending much on their being produced by the victory over some natural wrong propensity. The implantation of a virtue is the eradication of a vice. It will cost one man more to keep down a rising passion than to do a brilliant deed. It will try another more to keep back a sparkling but corrupt thought, which his wit had suggested, but which his religion checks, than it would to give a large sum in charity. A real Christian being deeply sensible of the worthlessness of any actions, which do not spring from the genuine fountain, will aim at such an habitual conformity to the divine image, that to perform all acts of justice, charity, kindness, temperance, and every kindred virtue, may become the temper, the habitual, the abiding state of his heart; that like natural streams they may flow spontaneously from the living source.

Practical Christianity then, is the actual operation of Christian principles. It is lying on the watch for occasions to exemplify them. It is "exercising ourselves unto godliness." A Christian cannot tell in the morning, what opportunities he may have of doing good during the day; but if he be a real Christian, he can tell that he will try to keep his heart open, his mind prepared, his affections alive to do whatever may occur in the way of duty. He will, as it were, stand in the way to receive the orders of Providence. Doing good is his vocation. Nor does the young artisan bind himself by firmer articles to the rigid performance of his master's work, than the indentured Christian to the active service of that divine Master, who himself "went about doing good." He rejects no duty, which comes within the sphere of his calling, nor does he think
the work he is employed in a good one, if he might be doing a better. His having well acquitted himself of a good action, is so far from furnishing him with an excuse for avoiding the next, that it is a new reason for his embarking in it. He looks not at the work which he has accomplished; but on that which he has to do. His views are always prospective. His charities are scarcely limited by his power. His will knows no limits. His fortune may have bounds. His benevolence has none. He is, in mind and desire, the benefactor of every miserable man. His heart is open to all the distressed; to the household of faith it overflows. Where the heart is large, however small the ability, a thousand ways of doing good will be invented. Christian charity is a great enlarger of means. Christian self-denial negatively accomplishes the purpose of the favorites of fortune in the Fables of the Nursery: — if it cannot fill the purse by a wish, it will not empty it by a vanity. It provides for others by abridging from itself. Having carefully defined what is necessary and becoming, it allows of no encroachment on its definition. Superfluities it will lop, vanities it will cut off. The deviser of liberal things will find means of effecting them, which to the indolent appear incredible, to the covetous impossible. Christian beneficence takes a large sweep. That circumference cannot be small, of which God is the centre. Nor does religious charity in a Christian stand still because not kept in motion by the main spring of the world. Money may fail, but benevolence will be going on. If he cannot relieve want, he may mitigate sorrow. He may warn the inexperienced, he may instruct the ignorant, he may confirm the doubting. The Christian will find out the cheapest way of being good as well as of doing good. If he cannot give money, he may exercise a more difficult virtue; he may forgive injuries. Forgiveness is the economy of the heart. A Christian will find it cheaper to pardon than to resent. Forgiveness saves the expense of anger, the cost of hatred, the waste of spirits. It also puts the soul into a frame, which makes the practice of other virtues easy. The achievement of a hard duty is a great abolisher of difficulties. If great occasions do not arise, he will thankfully seize on small ones. If he cannot glorify God by serving others, he knows that he has always something to do at home; some evil temper to correct, some wrong propensity to reform, some crooked practice to straighten. He will never be at a loss for employment, while there is a sin
or a misery in the world; he will never be idle, while there is a distress to be relieved in another, or a corruption to be cured in his own heart. We have employments assigned to us for every circumstance in life. When we are alone, we have our thoughts to watch; in the family, our tempers; in company, our tongues.

What an example of disinterested goodness and unbounded kindness, have we in our heavenly Father, who is merciful over all his works, who distributes common blessings without distinction, who bestows the necessary refreshments of life, the shining sun and the refreshing shower, without waiting, as we are apt to do, for personal merit, or attachment or gratitude; who does not look out for desert, but want as a qualification for his favors; who does not afflict willingly, who delights in the happiness, and desires the salvation of all his children, who dispenses his daily munificence and bears with our daily offences; who in return for our violation of his laws, supplies our necessities, who waits patiently for our repentance, and even solicits us to have mercy on our own souls!

What a model for our humble imitation, is that divine person who was clothed with our humanity; who dwelt among us, that the pattern being brought near, might be rendered more engaging, the conformity be made more practicable; whose whole life was one unbroken series of universal charity; who in his complicated bounties, never forgot that man is compounded both of soul and body; who after teaching the multitude, fed them; who repulsed none for being ignorant; was impatient with none for being dull; despised none for being contemned by the world; rejected none for being sinners; who encouraged those whose importunity others censured; who in healing sicknesses converted souls, who gave bread and forgave injuries!

It will be the endeavor of the sincere Christian to illustrate his devotions in the morning, by his actions during the day. He will try to make his conduct a practical exposition of the divine prayer which made a part of them. He will desire "to hallow the name of God," to promote the enlargement and "the coming" of the "kingdom" of Christ. He will endeavor to do and to suffer his whole will; "to forgive" as he himself trusts that he is forgiven. He will resolve to avoid that "temptation" into which he had been praying "not to be led;" and he will labor to shun the "evil," from which he had been begging to be "delivered." He thus makes his prayers as practical as
the other parts of his religion, and labors to render his conduct as spiritual as his prayers. The commentary and the text are of reciprocal application.

If this gracious Saviour has left us a perfect model for our devotion in his prayer, he has left a model no less perfect for our practice in his sermon. This divine exposition has been sometimes misunderstood. It was not so much a supplement to a defective law, as the restoration of the purity of a perfect law from the corrupt interpretations of its blind expounders. These persons had ceased to consider it as forbidding the principle of sin, and as only forbidding the act. Christ restores it to its original meaning, spreads it out in its due extent, shows the largeness of its dimensions and the spirit of its institution. He unfolds all its motions, tendencies, and relations. Not contenting himself, as human legislators are obliged to do, to prohibit a man the act which is injurious to others, but the inward temper which is prejudicial to himself.

There cannot be a more striking instance, how emphatically every doctrine of the Gospel has a reference to practical goodness, than is exhibited by St. Paul, in that magnificent picture of the resurrection, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, which our church has happily selected, for the consolation of survivors at the last closing scene of mortality. After an inference as triumphant, as it is logical, that because "Christ is risen, we shall rise also," after the most philosophical illustration of the raising of the body from the dust, by the process of grain sown in the earth, and springing up into a new mode of existence; after describing the subjugation of all things to the Redeemer, and his laying down the mediatorial kingdom; after sketching with a seraph's pencil, the relative glories of the celestial and terrestrial bodies; after exhausting the grandest images of created nature, and the dissolution of nature itself; after such a display of the solemnities of the great day, as makes this world, and all its concerns shrink into nothing: In such a moment, when, if ever, the rapt spirit might be supposed too highly wrought for precept and admonition — the apostle, wound up as he was, by the energies of inspiration, to the immediate view of the glorified state — the last trumpet sounding — the change from mortal to immortality effected in the twinkling of an eye — the sting of death drawn out — victory snatched from the grave — then, by a turn, as surprising as it is beautiful, he draws a conclusion as unexpectedly practical as his premises
were grand and awful: — "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Then at once, by another quick transition, resorting from the duty to the reward, and winding up the whole with an argument as powerful, as his rhetoric had been sublime, he adds — "forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

CHAP. III.

Mistakes in Religion.

To point out, with precision, all the mistakes which exist in the present day, on the awful subject of religion, would far exceed the limits of this small work. No mention, therefore, is intended to be made of the opinions, or the practice of any particular body of people; nor will any notice be taken of any of the peculiarities of the numerous sects and parties which have risen up among us. It will be sufficient for the present purpose, to hazard some slight remarks on a few of those common classes of characters which belong, more or less, to most general bodies.

There are, among many others, three different sorts of religious professors. The religion of one consists in a sturdy defence of what they themselves call orthodoxy, an attendance on public worship, and a general decency of behavior. In their views of religion, they are not a little apprehensive of excess, not perceiving that their danger lies on the other side. They are far from rejecting faith, or morals, but are somewhat afraid of believing too much, and a little scrupulous about doing too much, lest the former be suspected of fanaticism, and the latter of singularity. These Christians consider religion as a point, which they, by their regular observances, having attained, there is nothing further required but to maintain the point they have reached, by a repetition of the same observances. They are therefore satisfied to remain stationary, considering that whoever has obtained his end, is of course saved the labor of pursuit; he is to keep his ground, without troubling himself in searching after an imaginary perfection.
These frugal Christians are afraid of nothing so much as superfluity in their love, and supererogation in their obedience. This kind of fear, however, is always superfluous, but most especially in those who are troubled with the apprehension. They are apt to weigh in the nicely poised scales of scrupulous exactness, the duties which must of hard necessity be done, and those which without much risk may be left undone; compounding for a larger indulgence by the relinquishment of a smaller; giving up, through fear, a trivial gratification to which they are less inclined, and snatching doubtfully, as an equivalent, at one they like better. The gratification in both cases being perhaps such as a manly mind would hardly think worth contending for, even were religion out of the question. Nothing but love to God can conquer love of the world. One grain of that divine principle would make the scale of self-indulgence kick the beam.

These persons dread nothing so much as enthusiasm. Yet if to look for effects without their predisposing causes; to depend for heaven on that to which heaven was never promised, be features of enthusiasm, then are they themselves enthusiasts.

The religion of a second class, we have already described in the two preceding chapters. It consists in a heart devoted to its Maker; inwardly changed in its temper and disposition, yet deeply sensible of its remaining infirmities; continually aspiring, however, to higher improvements in faith, hope and charity, and thinking that "the greatest of these is charity." These, by the former class, are reckoned enthusiasts, but they are, in fact, if Christianity be true, acting on the only rational principles. If the doctrines of the Gospel have any solidity, if its promises have any meaning, these Christians are building on no false ground. They hope that submission to the power of God, obedience to his laws, compliance with his will, trust in his word, are, through the efficacy of the Eternal Spirit, real evidences, because they are vital acts of genuine faith in Jesus Christ. If they profess not to place their reliance on works, they are however more zealous in performing them than the others, who, professing to depend on their good deeds for salvation, are not always diligent in securing it by the very means which they themselves establish to be alone effectual.

There is a third class—the high-flown professor, who looks down from the giddy heights of antinomian delusion
on the other two, abhors the one, and despises the other, concludes that the one is lost, and the other in a fair way to be so. Though perhaps not living himself in any course of immorality, which requires the sanction of such doctrines, he does not hesitate to imply in his discourse, that virtue is heathenish, and good works superfluous, if not dangerous. He does not consider that, though the Gospel is an act of oblivion to penitent sinners, yet it nowhere promises pardon to those who continue to live in a state of rebellion against God, and of disobedience to his laws. He forgets to insist to others that it is of little importance even to believe that sin is an evil, (which, however, they do not always believe,) while they persist to live in it; that to know every thing of duty except the doing it, is to offend God with an aggravation, from which ignorance itself is exempt. It is not giving ourselves up to Christ in a nameless, inexplicable way, which will avail us. God loves an humble, not an audacious faith. To suppose that the blood of Christ redeems us from sin, while sin continues to pollute the soul, is to suppose an impossibility; to maintain that it is effectual for the salvation, and not for the sanctification of the sinner, is to suppose that it acts like an amulet, an incantation, a talisman, which is to produce its effect by operating on the imagination, and not on the disease.

The religion which mixes with human passions, and is set on fire by them, will make a stronger blaze than that light which is from above, which sheds a steady and lasting brightness on the path, and communicates a sober but durable warmth to the heart. It is equable and constant; while the other, like culinary fire, fed by gross materials, is extinguished the sooner from the fierceness of the flame.

That religion which is merely seated in the passions, is not only liable to wear itself out by its own impetuosity, but to be driven out by some other passion. The dominion of violent passions is short. They dispossess each other. When religion has had its day, it gives way to the next usurper. Its empire is no more solid than it is lasting, when principle and reason do not fix it on the throne.

The first of the above classes consider prudence as the paramount virtue in religion. Their antipodes, the flaming professors, believe a burning zeal to be the exclusive grace. They reverse Saint Paul's collocation of the three Christian
graces, and think that the greatest of these is faith. Though even in respect of this grace, their conduct and conversation too often give us reason to lament that they do not bear in mind its genuine and distinctive properties. Their faith instead of working by love, seems to be adopted from a notion that it leaves the Christian nothing to do, rather than because it is its nature to lead him to do more and better than other men.

In this case, as in many others, that which is directly contrary to what is wrong, is wrong also. If each opponent would only barter half his favorite quality with the favorite quality of the other, both parties would approach nearer to the truth. They might even furnish a complete Christian between them, that is, provided the zeal of the one was sincere, and the prudence of the other honest. But the misfortune is, each is as proud of not possessing the quality he wants, because his adversary has it, as he is proud of possessing that of which the other is destitute, and because he is destitute of it.

Among the many mistakes in religion, it is commonly thought that there is something so unintelligible, absurd and fanatical in the term conversion, that those who employ it run no small hazard of being involved in the ridicule it excites. It is seldom used but ludicrously, or in contempt. This arises partly from the levity and ignorance of the censurer, but perhaps as much from the imprudence and enthusiasm of those who have absurdly confined it to real or supposed instances of sudden or miraculous changes from profligacy to piety. But surely, with reasonable people, we run no risk in asserting that he, who being awakened by any of those various methods which the Almighty uses to bring his creatures to the knowledge of himself, who seeing the corruptions that are in the world, and feeling those with which his own heart abounds, is brought, whether gradually or more rapidly, from an evil heart of unbelief, to a lively faith in the Redeemer; from a life, not only of gross vice, but of worldliness and vanity, to a life of progressive piety; whose humility keeps pace with his progress; who, though his attainments are advancing, is so far from counting himself to have attained, that he presses onward with unabated zeal; and evidences, by the change in his conduct, the change that has taken place in his heart—such an one is surely as sincerely converted, and the effect is as much produced by the same divine energy, as if some instantaneous revolution
in his character had given it a miraculous appearance. The doctrines of Scripture are the same now as when David called them, "a law converting the soul, and giving light to the eyes." This is, perhaps, the most accurate and comprehensive definition of the change for which we are contending, for it includes both the illumination of the understanding, and the alteration in the disposition.

If, then, this obnoxious expression signify nothing more nor less than that change of character which consists in turning from the world to God, however the term may offend, there is nothing ridiculous in the thing. Now, as it is not for the term which we contend, but for the principle conveyed by it; so it is the principle, and not the term, which is the real ground of objection; though it is a little inconsistent that many who would sneer at the idea of conversion, would yet take it extremely ill if it were suspected that their hearts were not turned to God.

Reformation, a term against which no objection is ever made, would, if words continued to retain their primitive signification, convey the same idea. For it is plain that to re-form means to make anew. In the present use, however, it does not convey the same meaning in the same extent, nor indeed does it imply the operation of the same principle. Many are reformed on human motives, many are partially reformed; but only those who, as our great poet says, are "reformed altogether," are converted. There is no complete reformation in the conduct effected without a revolution in the heart. Ceasing from some sins; retaining others in a less degree; or adopting such as are merely creditable; or flying from one sin to another; or ceasing from the external act without any internal change of disposition, is not Christian reformation. The new principle must abolish the old habit, the rooted inclination must be subdued by the substitution of an opposite one. The natural bias must be changed. The actual offence will no more be pardoned than cured if the inward corruption be not eradicated. To be "alive unto God through Jesus Christ" must follow "the death unto sin." There cannot be new aims and ends where there is not a new principle to produce them. We shall not choose a new path until a light from Heaven direct our choice and "guide our feet." We shall not "run the way of God's commandments," till God himself enlarge our heart.

We do not, however, insist that the change required is
such as precludes the possibility of falling into sin; but it is a change which fixes in the soul such a disposition as shall make sin a burden, as shall make the desire of pleasing God the governing desire of a man's heart; as shall make him hate the evil which he does; as shall make the lowness of his attainments the subject of his deepest sorrow. A Christian has hopes and fears, cares and temptations, inclinations and desires, as well as other men. God in changing the heart does not extinguish the passions. Were that the case, the Christian life would cease to be a warfare.

We are often deceived by that partial improvement which appears in the victory over some one bad quality. But we must not mistake the removal of a symptom for a radical cure of the disease. An occasional remedy might remove an accidental sickness, but it requires a general regimen to renovate the diseased constitution.

It is the natural but melancholy history of the unchanged heart, that, from youth to advanced years, there is no other revolution in the character but such as increases both the number and quality of its defects: that the levity, vanity, and self-sufficiency of the young man is carried into advanced life, and only meet, and mix with, the defects of a mature period; that, instead of crying out with the royal prophet, "O remember not my old sins," he is inflaming his reckoning by new ones: that age, protracting all the faults of youth, furnishes its own contingent of vices; that sloth, suspicion, and covetousness, swell the account which religion has not been called in to cancel; that the world, though it has lost the power to delight, has yet lost nothing of its power to enslave. Instead of improving in candor by the inward sense of its own defects, that very consciousness makes him less tolerant of the defects of others, and more suspicious of their apparent virtues. His charity in a warmer season having failed to bring him in that return of gratitude for which it was partly performed, and having never flowed from the genuine spring, is dried up. His friendships having been formed on worldly principles or interest, or ambition, or convivial hilarity, fail him. One must make some sacrifices to the world, is the prevailing language of the nominal Christian. "What will the world pay you for your sacrifices?" replies the real Christian. Though he finds that the world is insolvent, that it pays nothing of what is promised, for it cannot bestow what it does not possess—happiness; yet he continues to cling to it almost as confidently as if it had never disappointed him.
Were we called upon to name the object under the sun which excites the deepest commiseration in the heart of Christian sensibility, which includes in itself the most affecting incongruities, which contains the sum and substance of real human misery, we should not hesitate to say, an IRRELI GIOUS OLD AGE. The mere debility of declining years, even the hopelessness of decrepitude, in the pious, though they excite sympathy, yet it is the sympathy of tenderness unmixed with distress. We take and give comfort from the cheering persuasion that the exhausted body will soon cease to clog its immortal companion; that the dim and failing eyes will soon open on a world of glory. Dare we paint the reverse of the picture? Dare we suffer the imagination to dwell on the opening prospects of hoary impiety? Dare we figure to ourselves that the weakness, the miseries, the terrors we are now commiserating, are ease, are peace, are happiness, compared with the unutterable perspective?

There is a fatal way of lulling the conscience by entertaining diminishing thoughts of sins long since committed. We persuade ourselves to forget them, and we therefore persuade ourselves that they are not remembered by God. But though distance diminishes objects to the eye of the beholder, it does not actually lessen them. Their real magnitude remains the same. Deliver us, merciful God! from the delusion of believing that secret sins, of which the world has no cognizance, early sins, which the world has forgotten, but which are known to ‘him with whom we have to do,’ become by secrecy and distance as if they had never been. ‘Are not these things noted in thy book?’ Perhaps if we remember them, God may forget them, especially if our remembrance be such as to induce a sound repentance. If we remember them not, he assuredly will. The holy contrition which should accompany this remembrance, while it will not abate our humble trust in our compassionate Redeemer, will keep our conscience tender, and our heart watchful.

We do not deny that there is frequently much kindness and urbanity, much benevolence and generosity, in men who do not even pretend to be religious. These qualities often flow from constitutional feeling, natural softness of temper, and warm affections; often from an elegant education, that best human sweetener and polisher of social life. We feel a tender regret as we exclaim, ‘what a fine soil would such dispositions afford to plant religion in!’ Well
bred persons are accustomed to respect all the decorums of society, to connect inseparably the ideas of personal comfort with public esteem, of generosity with credit, of order with respectability. They have a keen sense of dishonor, and are careful to avoid every thing that may bring the shadow of discredit on their name. Public opinion is the breath by which they live, the standard by which they act; of course they would not lower by gross misconduct that standard on which their happiness depends. They have been taught to respect themselves; this they can do with more security while they can retain, on this half-way principle, the respect of others.

In some who make further advances towards religion, we continue to see it in that same low degree which we have always observed. It is dwarfish and stunted, it makes no shoots. Though it gives some signs of life, it does not grow. By a tame and spiritless round, or rather by this fixed and immovable position, we rob ourselves of that fair reward of peace and joy which attends on an humble consciousness of progress; on the feeling of difficulties conquered; on a sense of the divine favor. That religion which is profitable, is commonly perceptible. Nothing supports a traveller in his Christian course, like the conviction that he is getting on; like looking back on the country he has passed; and, above all, like the sense of that protection which has hitherto carried him on, and of that grace which has promised to support him to the end.

The proper motion of the renewed heart is still directed upward. True religion is of an aspiring nature, continually tending towards that Heaven from whence it was transplanted. Its top is high because its root is deep. It is watered by a perennial fountain; in its most flourishing state it is always capable of further growth. Real goodness proves itself to be such by a continual desire to be better. No virtue on earth is ever in a complete state. Whatever stage of religion any man has attained, if he be satisfied to rest in that stage, we would not call that man religious. The Gospel seems to consider the highest degree of goodness as the lowest with which a Christian ought to sit down satisfied. We cannot be said to be finished in any Christian grace, because there is not one which may not be carried further than we have carried it. This promotes the double purpose of keeping us humble as to our present stage, and of stimulating us to something higher which we may hope to attain.
That superficial thing which by mere people of the world is dignified by the appellation of religion, though it brings just that degree of credit which makes part of the system of worldly Christians; neither brings comfort for this world, nor security for the next. Outward observances, indispensable as they are, are not religion. They are the accessory but not the principal; they are important aids and adjuncts, but not the thing itself; they are its aliment but not its life, the fuel but not the flame, the scaffolding but not the edifice. Religion can no more subsist merely by them, than it can subsist without them. They are divinely appointed, and must be conscientiously observed; but observed as a means to promote an end, and not as an end in themselves.

The heartless homage of formal worship, where the living power does not give life to the form, the cold compliment of ceremonial attendance, without the animating principle, as it will not bring peace to our own mind, so neither will it satisfy a jealous God. That God whose eye is on the heart, "who trieth the reins and searcheth the spirits," will not be satisfied that we make him little more than a nominal deity, while the world is the real object of our worship. Such persons seem to have almost the whole body of performance; all they want is the soul. They are constant in their devotions, but the heart, which even the heathens esteemed the best part of the sacrifice, they keep away. They read the Scriptures, but rest in the letter, instead of trying themselves by its spirit. They consider it as an enjoined task, but not as the quick and powerful instrument put into their hands for the critical dissection of "piercing and dividing asunder the soul and spirit;" not as the penetrating "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." These well-intentioned persons seem to spend no considerable portion of time in religious exercises, and yet complain that they make little progress. They almost seem to insinuate, as if the Almighty did not keep his word with them, and manifest that religion to them is not "pleasantness," nor her "paths peace."

Of such may we not ask, Would you not do better to examine than to complain? to inquire whether you do indeed possess a heart which, notwithstanding its imperfections, is sincerely devoted to God? He who does not desire to be perfect is not sincere. Would you not do well to convince yourselves that God is not unfaithful? that his promises do not fail, that his goodness is not slackened?
May you not be entertaining some secret infidelity, practising some latent disobedience, withholding some part of your heart, neglecting to exercise that faith, subtracting something from that devotedness to which a Christian should engage himself, and to which the promises of God are annexed? Do you indulge no propensities contrary to his will? do you never resist the dictates of his spirit, never shut your eyes to its illumination, nor your heart to its influences? Do you not indulge some cherished sin which obscures the light of grace, some practice which obstructs the growth of virtue, some distrust which chills the warmth of love? the discovery will repay the search, and if you succeed in this scrutiny, let not the detection discourage but stimulate.

If, then, you resolve to take up religion in earnest, especially if you have actually adopted its customary forms, rest not in such low attainments as will afford neither present peace nor future happiness. To know Christianity only in its external forms, and its internal dissatisfactions, its superficial appearances without, and its disquieting apprehensions within, to be desirous of standing well with the world as a Christian, yet to be unsupported by a well-founded Christian hope, to depend for happiness on the opinion of men, instead of the favor of God, to go on dragging through the mere exercises of piety, without deriving from them real strength, or solid peace: to live in the dread of being called an enthusiast, by outwardly exceeding in religion, and in secret consciousness of falling short of it, to be conformed to the world’s view of Christianity, rather than to aspire to be transformed by the renewing of your mind, is a state not of pleasure but of penalty, not of conquest but of hopeless conflict, not of ingenuous love but of tormenting fear. It is knowing religion only as the captive in a foreign land knows the country in which he is a prisoner. He hears from the cheerful natives of its beauties, but is himself ignorant of every thing beyond his own gloomy limits. He hears of others as free and happy, but feels nothing himself but the rigors of incarceration.

The Christian character is little understood by the votaries of the world; if it were, they would be struck with its grandeur. It is the very reverse of that meanness and pusillanimity, that abject spirit and those narrow views, which those who know it not ascribe to it.

A Christian lives at the height of his being, not only
at the top of his spiritual, but of his intellectual life. He alone lives in the full exercise of his rational powers. Religion ennobles his reason while it enlarges it.

Let, then, your soul act up to its high destination, let not that which was made to soar to heaven, grovel in the dust. Let it not live so much below itself. You wonder it is not more fixed, when it is perpetually resting on things which are not fixed themselves. In the rest of a Christian there is stability. Nothing can shake his confidence but sin. Outward attacks and troubles rather fix than unsettle him, as tempests from without only serve to root the oak faster, while an inward canker will gradually rot and decay it.

These are only a few of the mistakes among the multitude which might have been pointed out; but these are noticed as being of common and every day occurrence. The ineffectiveness of such a religion will be obvious.

That religion which sinks Christianity into a mere conformity to religious usages, must always fail of substantial effects. If sin be seated in the heart, if that be its home, that is the place in which it must be combatted. It is in vain to attack it in the suburbs when it is lodged in the centre. Mere forms can never expel that enemy which they can never reach. By a religion of decencies, our corruptions may perhaps be driven out of sight, but they will never be driven out of possession. If they are expelled from their outworks, they will retreat to their citadel. If they do not appear in the grosser forms prohibited by the Decalogue, still they will exist. The shape may be altered but the principle will remain. They will exist in the spiritual modification of the same sins equally forbidden by the Divine Expositor. He who dares not be revengeful, will be unforgiving. He who ventures not to break the letter of the seventh commandment in act, will violate it in the spirit. He who has not courage to forfeit Heaven by profligacy, will scale it by pride, or forfeit it by unprofitableness.

It is not any vain hope built on some external privilege or performance on the one hand, nor a presumptuous confidence that our names are written in the book of life, on the other, which can afford a reasonable ground of safety, but it is endeavoring to keep all the commandments of God—it is living to him who died for us—it is being conformed to his image as well as redeemed by his blood. This is Christian virtue, this is the holiness of a believer. A lower
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motive will produce a lower morality, but such an unsanctified morality God will not accept.

For it will little avail us that Christ has died for us, that he has conquered sin, triumphed over the powers of darkness, and overcome the world, while any sin retains its unresisted dominion in our hearts, while the world is our idol, while our fostered corruptions cause us to prefer darkness to light. We must not persuade ourselves that we are reconciled to God while our rebellious hearts are not reconciled to goodness.

It is not casting a set of opinions into a mould, and a set of duties into a system, which constitutes the Christian religion. The circumference must have a centre, the body must have a soul, the performances must have a principle. Outward observances were wisely constituted to rouse our forgetfulness, to awaken our secular spirits, to call back our negligent hearts; but it was never intended that we should stop short in the use of them. They were designed to excite holy thoughts, to quicken us to holy deeds, but not to be used as equivalents for either. But we find it cheaper to serve God in a multitude of exterior acts, than to starve one interior corruption.

Nothing short of that uniform stable principle, that fixedness in religion which directs a man in all his actions, aims, and pursuits, to God as his ultimate end, can give consistency to his conduct or tranquillity to his soul. This state once attained, he will not waste all his thoughts and designs upon the world; he will not lavish all his affections on so poor a thing as his own advancement. He will desire to devote all to the only object worthy of them, to God. Our Saviour has taken care to provide that our ideas of glorifying him, may not run out into fanciful chimeras or subtle inventions, by simply stating—'Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.' This he goes on to inform us is the true evidence of our being of the number of his people, by adding—'So shall ye be my disciples.'
We deceive ourselves not a little, when we fancy that what is emphatically called the world, is only to be found in this or that situation. The world is everywhere. It is a nature as well as a place; a principle as well as a "local habitation and a name." Though the principle and the nature flourish most in those haunts which are their congenial soil, yet we are too ready, when we withdraw from the world abroad to bring it home, to lodge it in our own bosom. The natural heart is both its temple and its worshipper.

But the most devoted idolater of the world, with all the capacity and industry which he may have applied to the subject, has never yet been able to accomplish the grand design of uniting the interests of heaven and earth. This experiment, which has been more assiduously and more frequently tried, than that of the philosopher for the grand Hermetic secret, has been tried with about the same degree of success. The most laborious process of the spiritual chemist, to reconcile religion with the world, has never yet been competent to make the contending principles coalesce.

But to drop metaphor. Religion was never yet thoroughly relished by a heart full of the world. The world in return cannot be completely enjoyed where there is just religion enough to disturb its false peace. In such minds heaven and earth ruin each other's enjoyments.

There is a religion which is too sincere for hypocrisy, but too transient to be profitable; too superficial to reach the heart, too unproductive to proceed from it. It is slight, but not false. It has discernment enough to distinguish sin, but not firmness enough to oppose it; compunction sufficient to soften the heart, but not vigor sufficient to reform it. It laments when it does wrong, and performs all the functions of repentance of sin, except forsaking it. It has every thing of devotion except the stability, and gives every thing to religion except the heart. This is a religion of times, events, and circumstances; it is brought into play by accidents, and dwindles away with the occa-
sion which called it out. Festivals and fasts which occur but seldom, are much observed, and it is to be feared because they occur but seldom; while the great festival which comes every week, comes too often to be so respectfully treated. The piety of these people comes out much in sickness, but is apt to retreat again as recovery approaches. If they die, they are placed by their admirers in the Saints' calendar; if they recover, they go back into the world they had renounced, and again suspend their amendment as often as death suspends his blow.

There is another class whose views are still lower, who yet cannot so far shake off religion as to be easy without retaining its brief and stated forms, and who contrive to mix up these forms with a faith of a piece with their practice. They blend their inconsistent works with a vague and unwarranted reliance on what the Saviour has done for them, and thus patch up a merit and a propitiation of their own—running the hazard of incurring the danger of punishment by their lives, and inventing a scheme to avert it by their creed. Religion never interferes with their pleasures except by the compliment of a short and occasional suspension. Having got through these periodical acts of devotion, they return to the same scenes of vanity and idleness which they had quitted for the temporary duty; forgetting that it was the very end of those acts of devotion to cure the vanity and to correct the idleness. Had the periodical observance answered its true design, it would have disinclined them to the pleasure instead of giving them a dispensation for its indulgence. Had they used the devout exercise in a right spirit, and improved it to its true end, it would have set the heart and life at work on all those pursuits which it was calculated to promote. But their project has more ingenuity. By the stated minutes they give to religion, they cheaply purchase a protection for the misemployment of the rest of their time. They make these periodical devotions a kind of spiritual insurance office, which is to make up to the adventurers in pleasure, any loss or damage which they may sustain in its voyage.

It is of these shallow devotions, these presumed equivalents for a new heart and a new life, that God declares by the prophet, that he is "weary." Though of his own express appointment, they become "an abomination" to him, as soon as the sign comes to be rested in for the thing signified. We Christians have "our new moons
and our sacrifices” under other names and other shapes; of which sacrifices, that is, of the spirit in which they are offered, the Almighty has said, “I cannot, away with them, they are iniquity.”

Now is this superficial devotion that “giving up ourselves not with our lips only, but with our lives,” to our Maker, to which we solemnly pledge ourselves, at least once a week? Is consecrating an hour or two to public worship on the Sunday morning, making the Sabbath “a delight?” Is desecrating the rest of the day, by “doing our own ways, finding our own pleasure, speaking our own words,” making it “honorable?”

Sometimes in an awakening sermon, these periodical religionists hear, with awe and terror, of the hour of death and the day of judgment. Their hearts are penetrated with the solemn sounds. They confess the awful realities by the impression they make on their own feelings. The sermon ends, and with it the serious reflections it excited. While they listen to these things, especially if the preacher be alarming, they are all in all to them. They return to the world—and these things are as if they were not; as if they had never been; as if their reality lasted only while they were preached; as if their existence depended only on their being heard; as if truth were no longer truth than while it solicited their notice; as if there were as little stability in religion itself as in their attention to it. As soon as their minds are disengaged from the question, one would think that death and judgment were an invention, that heaven and hell were blotted from existence, that eternity ceased to be eternity, in the long intervals in which they cease to be the object of their consideration.

This is the natural effect of what we venture to denominate periodical religion. It is a transient homage kept totally distinct and separate from the rest of our lives, instead of its being made the prelude and the principle of a course of pious practice; instead of our weaving our devotions and our actions into one uniform tissue by doing all in one spirit and to one end. When worshippers of this description pray for “a clean heart and a right spirit,” when they beg of God to “turn away their eyes from beholding vanity,” is it not to be feared that they pray to be made what they resolve never to become, that they would be very unwilling to become as good as they pray to be made, and would be sorry to be as penitent as they profess to desire? But alas! they are in little danger of be-
ing taken at their word; there is too much reason to fear their petitions will not be heard or answered; for prayer for the pardon of sin will obtain no pardon while we retain the sin in hope that the prayer will be accepted without the renunciation.

The most solemn office of our religion, the sacred memorial of the death of its author, the blessed injunction and tender testimony of his dying love, the consolation of the humble believer, the gracious appointment for strengthening his faith, quickening his repentance, awakening his gratitude and kindling his charity, is too often resorted to on the same erroneous principle. He who ventures to live without the use of this holy institution, lives in a state of disobedience to the last appointment of his Redeemer. He who rests in it as a means for supplying the place of habitual piety, totally mistakes its design, and is fatally deceiving his own soul.

This awful solemnity is, it is to be hoped, rarely frequented even by this class of Christians, without a desire of approaching it with the pious feelings above described. But if they carry them to the altar, are they equally anxious to carry them away from it, are they anxious to maintain them after it? Does the rite so seriously approached, commonly leave any vestige of seriousness behind it? Are they careful to perpetuate the feelings they were so desirous to excite? Do they strive to make them produce solid and substantial effects?—Would that this inconstancy of mind were to be found only in the class of characters under consideration! Let the reader, however sincere in his desires, let the writer, however ready to lament the levity of others, seriously ask their own hearts if they can entirely acquit themselves of the inconsistency they are so forward to blame? If they do not find the charge brought against others but too applicable to themselves?

Irreverence antecedent to, or during, this sacred solemnity, is far more rare than durable improvement after it. If there are, as we are willing to believe, none so profane as to violate the act, except those who impiously use it only as "a picklock to a place," there are too few who make it lastingly beneficial. Few so thoughtless as not to approach it with resolutions of amendment; few comparatively who carry those resolutions into effect. Fear operates in the previous instance. Why should not love operate in that which is subsequent?

A periodical religion is accompanied with a periodical
repentance. This species of repentance is adopted with no small mental reservation. It is partial and disconnect-
ed. These fragments of contrition, these broken parcels of penitence—while a succession of worldly pursuits is not only resorted to, but is intended to be resorted to, during the whole of the intervening spaces—is not that sorrow which the Almighty has promised to accept. To render it pleasing to God and efficacious to ourselves, there must be an agreement in the parts, an entireness in the whole web of life. There must be an integral repentance. A quarterly contrition in the four weeks preceding the sacred seasons, will not wipe out the daily offences, the hourly negligences, of the whole sinful year. Sins half forsaken through fear, and half retained through partially resisted temptation and partially adopted resolution, make up but an unprofitable piety.

In the bosom of these professors there is a perpetual conflict between fear and inclination. In conversation you will generally find them very warm in the cause of religion; but it is religion as opposed to infidelity, not as opposed to worldly mindedness. They defend the worship of God, but desire to be excused from his service. Their heart is the slave of the world, but their blindness hides from them the turpitude of that world. They commend piety, but dread its requisitions. They allow that repentance is necessary, but then how easy is it to find reasons for deferring a necessary evil? Who will hastily adopt a painful measure which he can find a creditable pretence for evading? They censure whatever is ostensibly wrong, but avoiding only part of it, the part they retain robs them of the benefits of their partial renunciation.

We cannot sufficiently admire the wisdom of the church in enjoining extraordinary acts of devotion at the return of those festivals so happily calculated to excite devotional feelings. Extraordinary repentance of sin is peculiarly suitable to the seasons that record those grand events which sin occasioned. But the church never intended that these more stated and strict self-examinations should preclude our habitual self-inspection. It never intended its holy offices to supply the place of general holiness, but to pro-
mote it. It intended that these solemn occasions should animate the flame of piety, but it never meant to furnish a reason for neglecting to keep the flame alive till the next return should again kindle the dying embers. It meant that every such season should gladden the heart of the
Christian at its approach, and not discharge him from duty at its departure. It meant to lighten his conscience of the burden of sin, not to encourage him to begin a new score, again to be wiped off at the succeeding festival. It intended to quicken the vigilance of the believer, and not to dismiss the sentinel from his post. If we are not the better for these divinely appointed helps, we are the worse. If we use them as a discharge from that diligence which they were intended to promote, we convert our blessings into snares.

This abuse of our advantages arises from our not incorporating our devotions into the general habit of our lives. Till our religion become an inward principle, and not an external act, we shall not receive that benefit from her forms, however excellent, which they are calculated to convey. It is to those who possess the spirit of Christianity that her forms are so valuable. To them the form excites the spirit, as the spirit animates the form. Till religion become the desire of our hearts, it will not become the business of our lives. We are far from meaning that it is to be its actual occupation; but that every portion, every habit, every act of life is to be animated by its spirit, influenced by its principle, governed by its power.

The very make of our nature, and our necessary commerce with the world, naturally fill our hearts and minds with thoughts and ideas, over which we have unhappily too little control. We find this to be the case when in our better hours we attempt to give ourselves up to serious reflection. How many intrusions of worldly thoughts, how many impertinent imaginations, not only irrelevant, but uncalled and unwelcome, crowd in upon the mind so forcibly as scarcely to be repelled by our sincerest efforts. How impotent then to repel such images must that mind be, which is devoted to worldly pursuits, which yields itself up to them, whose opinions, habits, and conduct are under their allowed influence!

If, as we have before observed, religion consists in a new heart and a new spirit, it will become not our occasional act, but our abiding disposition, proving its settled existence in the mind by its habitually disposing our thoughts and actions, our devotions and our practice, to a conformity to each other and to itself.

Let us not consider a spirit of worldliness as a little infirmity, as a natural and therefore a pardonable weakness; as a trifling error which will be overlooked for the
sake of our many good qualities. It is in fact the essence of our other faults; the temper that stands between us and our salvation; the spirit which is in direct opposition to the spirit of God. Individual sins may more easily be cured, but this is the principle of all spiritual disease. A worldly spirit where it is rooted and cherished, runs through the whole character, insinuates itself in all we say and think and do. It is this which makes us so dead in religion, so averse from spiritual things, so forgetful of God, so unmindful of eternity, so satisfied with ourselves, so impatient of serious discourse, and so alive to that vain and frivolous intercourse which excludes intellect almost as much as piety from our general conversation.

It is not therefore our more considerable actions alone which require watching, for they seldom occur. They do not form the habit of life in ourselves, nor the chief importance of our example to others. It is to our ordinary behavior, it is to our deportment in common life; it is to our prevailing turn of mind in general intercourse, by which we shall profit or corrupt those with whom we associate. It is our conduct in social life which will help to diffuse a spirit of piety or a distaste to it. If we have much influence, this is the place in which particularly to exert it. If we have little, we have still enough to infect the temper and lower the tone of our narrow society.

If we really believe that it is the design of Christianity to raise us to a participation of the divine nature, the slightest reflection on this elevation of our character would lead us to maintain its dignity in the ordinary intercourse of life. We should not so much inquire whether we are transgressing any actual prohibition, whether any standing law is pointed against us, as whether we are supporting the dignity of the Christian character; whether we are acting suitably to our profession; whether more exactness in the common occurrences of the day, more correctness in our conversation, would not be such evidences of our religion, as by being obvious and intelligible, might not almost insensibly produce important effects.

The most insignificant people must not through indolence and selfishness undervalue their own influence. Most persons have a little circle of which they are a sort of centre. Its smallness may lessen their quantity of good, but does not diminish the duty of using that little influence wisely. Where is the human being so inconsiderable but that he may in some shape benefit others, either by calling their
virtues into exercise, or by setting them an example of virtue himself? But we are humble just in the wrong place. When the exhibition of our talents or splendid qualities is in question, we are not backward in the display. When a little self-denial is to be exercised, when a little good might be effected by our example, by our discreet management in company, by giving a better turn to conversation, then at once we grow wickedly modest.—"Such an insignificant creature as I am can do no good"—"Had I a higher rank or brighter talents, then indeed my influence might be exerted to some purpose."—Thus under the mask of diffidence, we justify our indolence; and let slip those lesser occasions of promoting religion, which if we all improved, how much might the condition of society be raised.

The hackneyed interrogation, "What—must we be always talking about religion?" must have the hackneyed answer—Far from it. Talking about religion is not being religious. But we may bring the spirit of religion into company and keep it in perpetual operation when we do not professedly make it our subject. We may be constantly advancing its interests, we may without effort or affectation be giving an example of candor, of moderation, of humility, of forbearance. We may employ our influence by correcting falsehood, by checking levity, by discouraging calumny, by vindicating misrepresented merit, by countenancing every thing which has a good tendency—in short, by throwing our whole weight, be it great or small, into the right scale.

CHAP. V.

Prayer.

Prayer is the application of want to him who only can relieve it; the voice of sin to him who can alone pardon it. It is the urgency of poverty, the prostration of humility, the fervency of penitence, the confidence of trust. It is not eloquence, but earnestness, not the definition of helplessness, but the feeling of it; not figures of speech, but compunction of soul. It is the "Lord save us we perish" of drowning Peter; the cry of faith to the ear of mercy.
Adoration is the noblest employment of created beings, confession the natural language of guilty creatures; gratitude the spontaneous expression of pardoned sinners.

Prayer is desire. It is not a conception of the mind, nor a mere effort of the intellect, nor an act of the memory; but an elevation of the soul towards its Maker; a pressing sense of our own ignorance and infirmity, a consciousness of the perfections of God, of his readiness to hear, of his power to help, of his willingness to save.

It is not an emotion produced in the senses, nor an effect wrought by the imagination; but a determination of the will, an effusion of the heart.

Prayer is the guide to self knowledge, by prompting us to look after our sins in order to pray against them; a motive to vigilance, by teaching us to guard against those sins which, through self examination, we have been enabled to detect.

Prayer is an act both of the understanding and of the heart. The understanding must apply itself to the knowledge of the divine perfections, or the heart will not be led to the adoration of them. It would not be a reasonable service, if the mind was excluded. It must be rational worship, or the human worshipper would not bring to the service the distinguishing faculty of his nature, which is reason. It must be spiritual worship, or it would want the distinctive quality to make it acceptable to Him, who has declared that He will be worshipped "in spirit and in truth."

Prayer is right in itself as the most powerful means of resisting sin and advancing in holiness. It is above all right, as every thing is, which has the authority of Scripture, the command of God and the example of Christ.

There is a perfect consistency in all the ordinances of God; a perfect congruity in the whole scheme of his dispensations. If man were not a corrupt creature, such prayer as the gospel enjoins would not have been necessary. Had not prayer been an important means for curing those corruptions, a God of perfect wisdom would not have ordered it. He would not have prohibited every thing which tends to inflame and promote them, had they not existed, nor would he have commanded every thing that has a tendency to diminish and remove them, had not their existence been fatal. Prayer therefore is an indispensable part of his economy and of our obedience.

It is a hackneyed objection to the use of prayer, that it is
offending the omniscience of God to suppose he requires information of our wants. But no objection can be more futile. We do not pray to inform God of our wants, but to express our sense of the wants which he already knows. As he has not so much made his promise to our necessities, as to our requests, it is reasonable that our requests should be made, before we can hope that our necessities will be relieved. God does not promise to those who want that they shall "have," but to those who "ask;" nor to those who need that they shall "find," but to those who "seek." So far therefore from his previous knowledge of our wants being a ground of objection to prayer, it is in fact the true ground for our application. Were he not knowledge itself, our information would be of as little use, as our application would be, were he not goodness itself.

We cannot attain to a just notion of prayer, while we remain ignorant of our own nature, of the nature of God as revealed in Scripture, of our relation to him and dependence on him. If therefore we do not live in the daily study of the holy Scriptures, we shall want the highest motives to this duty and the best helps for performing it; if we do, the cogency of these motives, and the inestimable value of these helps, will render argument unnecessary and exhortation superfluous.

One cause therefore of the dullness of many Christians in prayer, is, their slight acquaintance with the sacred volume. They hear it periodically, they read it occasionally, they are contented to know it historically, to consider it superficially; but they do not endeavor to get their minds imbued with its Spirit. If they store their memory with its facts, they do not impress their hearts with its truths. They do not regard it as the nutriment on which their spiritual life and growth depend. They do not pray over it; they do not consider all its doctrines as of practical application; they do not cultivate that spiritual discernment which alone can enable them judiciously to appropriate its promises and its denunciations to their own actual case. They do not apply it as an unerring line to ascertain their own rectitude or obliquity.

In our retirements, we too often fritter away our precious moments, moments rescued from the world, in trivial, sometimes it is to be feared, in corrupt thoughts. But if we must give the reins to our imagination, let us send this excursive faculty to range among great and noble objects. Let it stretch forward under the sanction of faith and the
PRAYER.

anticipation of prophecy, to the accomplishment of those glorious promises and tremendous threatenings which will soon be realized in the eternal world. These are topics which under the safe and sober guidance of Scripture, will fix its largest speculations and sustain its loftiest flights. The same Scripture while it expands and elevates the mind, will keep it subject to the dominion of truth; while at the same time it will teach it that its boldest excursions must fall infinitely short of the astonishing realities of a future state.

Though we cannot pray with a too deep sense of sin, we may make our sins too exclusively the object of our prayers. While we keep, with a self-abasing eye, our own corruptions in view, let us look with equal intentness on that mercy, which cleanseth from all sin. Let our prayers be all humiliation, but let them not be all complaint. When men indulge no other thought but that they are rebels, the hopelessness of pardon hardens them into disloyalty. Let them look to the mercy of the king, as well as to the rebellion of the subject. If we contemplate his grace as displayed in the Gospel, then, though our humility will increase, our despair will vanish. Gratitude in this as in human instances will create affection. "We love him because he first loved us."

Let us then always keep our unworthiness in view as a reason why we stand in need of the mercy of God in Christ; but never plead it as a reason why we should not draw nigh to him to implore that mercy. The best men are unworthy for their own sakes; the worst on repentance will be accepted for his sake and through his merits.

In prayer, then, the perfections of God, and especially his mercies in our redemption, should occupy our thoughts as much as our sins; our obligation to him as much as our departures from him. We should keep up in our hearts a constant sense of our own weakness, not with a design to discourage the mind and depress the spirits; but with a view to drive us out of ourselves, in search of the divine assistance. We should contemplate our infirmity in order to draw us to look for his strength, and to seek that power from God which we vainly look for in ourselves: We do not tell a sick friend of his danger in order to grieve or terrify him, but to induce him to apply to his physician, and to have recourse to his remedy.

Among the charges which have been brought against serious piety, one is, that it teaches men to despair. The
charge is just in one sense, as to the fact, but false in the sense intended. It teaches us to despair indeed of ourselves, while it inculcates that faith in a Redeemer, which is the true antidote to despair. Faith quickens the doubting spirit while it humbles the presumptuous. The lowly Christian takes comfort in the blessed promise, that God will never forsake them that are his. The presumptuous man is equally right in the doctrine, but wrong in applying it. He takes that comfort to himself which was meant for another class of characters. The mal-appropriation of Scripture promises and threatenings, is the cause of much error and delusion.

Though some devout enthusiasts have fallen into error by an unnatural and impracticable disinterestedness, asserting that God is to be loved exclusively for himself with an absolute renunciation of any view of advantage to ourselves; yet that prayer cannot be mercenary, which involves God's glory with our own happiness, and makes his will the law of our requests. Though we are to desire the glory of God supremely; though this ought to be our grand acting principle, yet he has graciously permitted, commanded, invited us, to attach our own happiness to this primary object. The bible exhibits not only a beautiful, but an inseparable combination of both, which delivers us from the danger of unnaturally renouncing our own benefit for the promotion of God's glory on the one hand; and on the other, from seeking any happiness independent of him, and underived from him. In enjoining us to love him supremely, he has connected an unspeakable blessing with a paramount duty, the highest privilege with the most positive command.

What a triumph for the humble Christian, to be assured that "the high and lofty one which inhabiteth eternity," condescends at the same time to dwell in the heart of the contrite; in his heart! To know that God is the God of his life, to know that he is even invited to take the Lord for his God.—To close with God's offers, to accept his invitations, to receive God as his portion, must surely be more pleasing to our heavenly Father, than separating our happiness from his glory. To disconnect our interests from his goodness, is at once to detract from his perfections, and to obscure the brightness of our own hopes. The declarations of inspired writers are confirmed by the authority of the heavenly hosts. They proclaim that the glory of God and the happiness of his creatures, so far from interfering
are connected with each other. We know but of one anthem composed and sung by angels, and this most harmoniously combines "the glory of God in the highest with peace on earth and good will to men."

"The beauty of Scripture," says the great Saxon reformer, "consists in pronouns." This God is our God—God even our own God shall bless us—How delightful the appropriation! to glorify him as being in himself consummate excellence, and to love him from the feeling that this excellence is directed to our felicity! Here modesty would be ingratitude, disinterestedness rebellion. It would be severing ourselves from him, in whom we live, and move, and are; it would be dissolving the connection which he has condescended to establish between himself and his creatures.

It has been justly observed, that the scripture saints make this union the chief ground of their grateful exultation—"My strength," "my rock," "my fortress," "my deliverer!" again, "let the God of my salvation be exalted!" Now take away the pronoun and substitute the article the, how comparatively cold is the impression! The consummation of the joy arises from the peculiarity, the intimacy, the endearment of the relation.

Nor to the liberal Christian is the grateful joy diminished, when he blesses his God as "the God of all them that trust in him." All general blessings, will he say, all providential mercies, are mine individually, are mine as completely, as if no other shared in the enjoyment. Life, light, the earth and heavens, the sun and stars, whatever sustains the body, and recreates the spirits! My obligation is as great as if the mercy had been made purely for me; as great? nay it is greater—it is augmented by a sense of the millions who participate in the blessing. The same enlargement of the personal obligation holds good, nay rises higher in the mercies of Redemption. The Lord is my Saviour as completely as if he had redeemed only me. That he has redeemed "a great multitude which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues" is diffusion without abatement; it is general participation without individual diminution. Each has all.

In adoring the Providence of God, we are apt to be struck with what is new and out of course, while we too much overlook long, habitual and uninterrupted mercies. But common mercies, if less striking are more valuable, both because we have them always, and for the reason
above assigned, because others share them. The ordinary blessings of life are overlooked for the very reason that they ought to be most prized, because they are most uniformly bestowed. They are most essential to our support, and when once they are withdrawn we begin to find that they are also most essential to our comfort. Nothing raises the price of a blessing like its removal, whereas it was its continuance which should have taught us its value. We require novelties, to awaken our gratitude, not considering that it is the duration of mercies which enhances their value. We want fresh excitements. We consider mercies long enjoyed as things of course, as things to which we have a sort of presumptive claim; as if God had no right to withdraw what he had once bestowed, as if he were obliged to continue what he has once been pleased to confer.

But that the sun has shone unremittingly from the day that God created him, is not a less stupendous exertion of power than that the hand which fixed him in the heavens, and marked out his progress through them, once said by his servant, "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon." That he has gone on in his strength, driving his uninterrupted career, and "rejoicing as a giant to run his course," for six thousand years, is a more astonishing exhibition of Omnipotence than that he should have been once suspended by the hand which set him in motion. That the ordinances of heaven, that the established laws of nature, should have been for one day interrupted to serve a particular occasion, is a less real wonder, and certainly a less substantial blessing, than that in such a multitude of ages they should have pursued their appointed course, for the comfort of the whole system:

For ever singing, as they shine,
The hand that made us is divine.

As the affections of the Christian ought to be set on things above, so it is for them that his prayers will be chiefly addressed. God in promising to "give those who delight in him the desire of their heart," could never mean temporal things, for these they might desire improperly as to the object, and inordinately as to the degree. The promise relates principally to spiritual blessings. He not only gives us these mercies, but the very desire to obtain them is also his gift. Here our prayer requires no qualifying, no conditioning, no limitation. We cannot err in our choice, for God himself is the object of it; we cannot
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exceed in the degree, unless it were possible to love him too well, or to please him too much.

We should pray for worldly comforts, and for a blessing on our earthly plans, though lawful in themselves, conditionally, and with a reservation, because after having been earnest in our requests for them, it may happen that when we come to the petition, "thy will be done," we may in these very words be praying that our previous petitions may not be granted. In this brief request consist the vital principle, the essential spirit of prayer. God shows his munificence in encouraging us to ask most earnestly for the greatest things, by promising that the smaller "shall be added unto us." We therefore acknowledge his liberality most when we request the highest favors. He manifests his infinite superiority to earthly fathers by chiefly delighting to confer those spiritual gifts which they less solicitously desire for their children than those worldly advantages on which God sets so little value.

Nothing short of a sincere devotedness to God, can enable us to maintain an equality of mind, under unequal circumstances. We murmur that we have not the things we ask amiss, not knowing that they are withheld by the same mercy by which the things that are good for us are granted. Things good in themselves may not be good for us. A resigned spirit is the proper disposition to prepare us for receiving mercies, or for having them denied. Resignation of soul, like the allegiance of a good subject, is always in readiness though not in action; whereas an impatient mind is a spirit of disaffection, always prepared to revolt, when the will of the sovereign is in opposition to that of the subject. This seditious principle is the infallible characteristic of an unrenewed mind.

A sincere love of God will make us thankful when our supplications are granted, and patient and cheerful when they are denied. He who feels his heart rise against any divine dispensation ought not to rest till by serious meditation and earnest prayer it be moulded into submission. An habit of acquiescence in the will of God, will so operate on the faculties of his mind, that even his judgment will embrace the conviction, that what he once so ardently desired, would not have been that good thing, which his blindness had conspired with his wishes to make him believe it to be. He will recollect the many instances in which if his importunity had prevailed, the thing which ignorance requested, and wisdom denied, would have insured his
misery. Every fresh disappointment will teach him to distrust himself and to confide in God. Experience will instruct him that there may be a better way of hearing our requests than that of granting them. Happy for us that He to whom they are addressed knows which is best, and acts upon that knowledge.

Still lift for good the supplicating voice,
But leave to Heaven the measure and the choice;
Implore his aid, in his decisions rest,
Secure whate'er he gives, he gives the best.

We should endeavor to render our private devotions effectual remedies for our own particular sins. Prayer against sin in general is too indefinite to reach the individual case. We must bring it home to our own heart, else we may be confessing another man's sins and overlooking our own. If we have any predominant fault, we should pray more especially against that fault. If we pray for any virtue of which we particularly stand in need, we should dwell on our own deficiencies in that virtue, till our souls become deeply affected with our want of it. Our prayers should be circumstantial, not as was before observed for the information of Infinite Wisdom, but for the stirring up of our own dull affections. And as the recapitulation of our wants tends to keep up a sense of our dependence, the enlarging on our especial mercies will tend to keep alive a sense of gratitude. While indiscriminate petitions, confessions, and thanksgivings, leave the mind to wander in indefinite devotion and unaffecting generalities, without personality and without appropriation. It must be obvious that we except those grand universal points in which all have an equal interest, and which must always form the essence of public prayer.

On the blessing attending importunity in prayer, the Gospel is abundantly explicit. God perhaps delays to give, that we may persevere in asking. He may require importunity for our own sakes, that the frequency and urgency of the petition may bring our hearts into that frame to which he will be favorable.

As we ought to live in a spirit of obedience to his commands, so we should live in a frame of waiting for his blessing on our prayers, and in a spirit of gratitude when we have obtained it. This is that "preparation of the heart" which would always keep us in a posture for duty. If we desert the duty because an immediate blessing does
not visibly attend it, it shows that we do not serve God out of conscience, but selfishness; that we grudge expending on him that service which brings us in no immediate interest. Though he grant not our petition, let us never be tempted to withdraw our application.

Our reluctant devotions may remind us of the remark of a certain great political wit, who apologized for his late attendance in Parliament, by his being detained while a party of soldiers were dragging a volunteer to his duty. How many excuses do we find for not being in time! How many apologies for brevity! How many evasions for neglect! How unwilling, too, often, are we to come into the divine presence, how reluctant to remain in it! Those hours which are least valuable for business, which are least seasonable for pleasure, we commonly give to religion. Our energies which were so exerted in the society we have just quitted, are sunk as we approach the divine presence. Our hearts which were all alacrity in some frivolous conversation, become cold and inanimate, as if it were the natural property of devotion to freeze the affections. Our animal spirits which so readily performed their functions before, now slacken their vigor and lose their vivacity. The sluggish body sympathizes with the unwilling mind, and each promotes the deadness of the other; both are slow in listening to the call of duty; both are soon weary in performing it. As prayer requires all the energies of the compound being of man, so we too often feel as if there were a conspiracy of body, soul, and spirit, to dissemble and disqualify us for it.

When the heart is once sincerely turned to religion, we need not, every time we pray, examine into every truth, and seek for conviction over and over again; but assume that those doctrines are true, the truth of which we have already proved. From a general and fixed impression of these principles, will result a taste, a disposedness, a love, so intimate, that the convictions of the understanding will become the affections of the heart.

To be deeply impressed with a few fundamental truths, to digest them thoroughly, to meditate on them seriously, to pray over them fervently, to get them deeply rooted in the heart, will be more productive of faith and holiness, than to labor after variety, ingenuity or elegance. The indulgence of imagination will rather distract than edify. Searching after ingenious thoughts will rather divert the attention from God to ourselves, than promote fixedness of
PRAYER.

thought, singleness of intention, and devotedness of spirit. Whatever is subtle and refined, is in danger of being unscriptural. If we do not guard the mind it will learn to wander in quest of novelties. It will learn to set more value on original thoughts than devout affections. It is the business of prayer to cast down imaginations which gratify the natural activity of the mind, while they leave the heart unhumbled.

We should confine ourselves to the present business of the present moment; we should keep the mind in a state of perpetual dependence; we should entertain no long views. "Now is the accepted time." "To-day we must hear his voice." "Give us this day our daily bread." The manna will not keep till to-morrow: to-morrow will have its own wants, and must have its own petitions. To-morrow we must seek the bread of heaven afresh.

We should however avoid coming to our devotions with unfurnished minds. We should be always laying in materials for prayer, by a diligent course of serious reading, by treasuring up in our minds the most important truths. If we rush into the divine presence with a vacant or ignorant or unprepared mind, with a heart full of the world; as we shall feel no disposition or qualification for the work we are about to engage in, so we cannot expect that our petitions will be heard or granted. There must be some congruity between the heart and the object, some affinity between the state of our minds and the business in which they are employed, if we would expect success in the work.

We are often deceived both as to the principle and the effect of our prayers. When, from some external cause, the heart is glad, the spirits light, the thoughts ready, the tongue voluble, a kind of spontaneous eloquence is the result; with this we are pleased, and this ready flow we are willing to impose on ourselves for piety.

On the other hand when the mind is dejected, the animal spirits low, the thoughts confused; when opposite words do not readily present themselves, we are apt to accuse our hearts of want of fervor, to lament our weakness and to mourn that because we have had no pleasure in praying, our prayers have, therefore, not ascended to the throne of mercy. In both cases we perhaps judge ourselves unfairly. These unready accents, these faltering praises, these ill-expressed petitions, may find more acceptance than the florid talk with which we were so well satisfied: The latter consisted it may be of shining thoughts, floating on the
fancy, eloquent words dwelling only on the lips; the former was the sighing of a contrite heart, abased by the feeling of its own unworthiness, and awed by the perfections of a holy and heart-searching God. The heart is dissatisfied with its own dull and tasteless repetitions, which, with all their imperfections, infinite goodness may perhaps hear with favor. * We may not only be elated with the fluency, but even with the fervency of our prayers. Vanity may grow out of the very act of renouncing it, and we may begin to feel proud at having humbled ourselves so eloquently.

There is however a strain and spirit of prayer equally distinct from that facility and copiousness for which we certainly are never the better in the sight of God, and from that constraint and dryness for which we may be never the worse. There is a simple, solid, pious strain of prayer, in which the suppliant is so filled and occupied with a sense of his own dependence, and of the importance of the things for which he asks, and so persuaded of the power and grace of God through Christ to give him those things, that while he is engaged in it, he does not merely imagine, but feels assured that God is nigh to him as a reconciled Father, so that every burden and doubt are taken off from his mind. "He knows," as St. John expresses it, "that he has the petitions he desired of God," and feels the truth of that promise, "while they are yet speaking I will hear" This is the perfection of prayer.

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CHAP. VI.

Cultivation of a Devotional Spirit.

To maintain a devotional Spirit, two things are especially necessary—habitually to cultivate the disposition, and habitually to avoid whatever is unfavorable to it. Frequent retirement and recollection are indispensable, together

* Of these sort of repetitions, our admirable Church Liturgy has been accused as a fault; but this defect, if it be one, happily accommodates itself to our infirmities. Where is the favored being whose attention never wanders, whose heart accompanies his lips in every sentence? Is there no absence of mind in the petitioner, no wandering of the thoughts, no inconstancy of the heart, which these repetitions are wisely calculated to correct, to rouse the dead attention, to bring back the strayed affections?
with such a general course of reading, as, if it do not actually promote the spirit we are endeavoring to maintain, shall never be hostile to it. We should avoid as much as in us lies all such society, all such amusements as excite tempers, which it is the daily business of a Christian to subdue, and all those feelings which it is his constant duty to suppress.

And here may we venture to observe, that if some things which are apparently innocent, and do not assume an alarming aspect, or bear a dangerous character; things which the generality of decorous people affirm, (how truly we know not) to be safe for them; yet if we find that these things stir up in us improper propensities, if they awaken thoughts which ought not to be excited; if they abate our love for religious exercises, or infringe on our time for performing them; if they make spiritual concerns appear insipid, if they wind our heart a little more about the world; in short, if we have formerly found them injurious to our own souls, then let no example or persuasion, no belief of their alleged innocence, no plea of their perfect safety, tempt us to indulge in them. It matters little to our security what they are to others. Our business is with ourselves. Our responsibility is on our own heads. Others cannot know the side on which we are assailable. Let our own unbiased judgment determine our opinion, let our own experience decide for our own conduct.

In speaking of books, we cannot forbear noticing that very prevalent sort of reading, which is little less productive of evil, little less prejudicial to moral and mental improvement, than that which carries a more formidable appearance. We cannot confine our censure to those more corrupt writings which deprave the heart, debauch the imagination, and poison the principles. Of these the turpitude is so obvious, that no caution on this head, it is presumed, can be necessary. But if justice forbids us to confound the insipid with the mischievous, the idle with the vicious, and the frivolous with the profligate, still we can only admit of shades, deep shades we allow, of difference. These works, if comparatively harmless, yet debase the taste, slacken the intellectual nerve, let down the understanding, set the fancy loose, and send it gadding among low and mean objects. They not only run away with the time which should be given to better things, but gradually destroy all taste for better things. They sink the mind to their own standard, and give it a sluggish reluctance, we
had almost said, a moral incapacity for every thing above their level. The mind, by long habit of stooping, loses its erectness, and yields to its degradation. It becomes so low and narrow by the littleness of the things, which engage it, that it requires a painful effort to lift itself high enough, or to open itself wide enough, to embrace great and noble objects. The appetite is vitiated. Excess, instead of producing a surfeit, by weakening the digestion, only induces a loathing for stronger nourishment. The faculties which might have been expanding in works of science, or soaring in the contemplation of genius, become satisfied with the impertinences of the most ordinary fiction, lose their relish for the severity of truth, the elegance of taste, and the soberness of religion. Lulled in the torpor of repose, the intellect dozes, and enjoys in its waking dream,

All the wild trash of sleep, without the rest.

In avoiding books which excite the passions, it would seem strange to include even some devotional works. Yet such as merely kindle warm feelings, are not always the safest. Let us rather prefer those, which, while they tend to raise a devotional spirit, awaken the affections without disordering them, which, while they elevate the desires, purify them; which show us our own nature, and lay open its corruptions. Such as show us the malignity of sin, the deceitfulness of our hearts, the feebleness of our best resolutions; such as teach us to pull off the mask from the fairest appearances, and discover every hiding place, where some lurking evil would conceal itself; such as show us not what we appear to others, but what we really are; such as co-operating with our interior feelings, and showing us our natural state, point out our absolute need of a Redeemer, lead us to seek to him for pardon, from a conviction that there is no other refuge, no other salvation. Let us be conversant with such writings as teach us that while we long to obtain the remission of our transgressions, we must not desire the remission of our duties. Let us seek for such a Saviour as will not only deliver us from the punishment of sin, but from its dominion also.

And let us ever bear in mind, that the end of prayer is not answered when the prayer is finished. We should regard prayer as a means to a farther end. The act of prayer is not sufficient, we must cultivate a spirit of prayer. And though when the actual devotion is over, we cannot,
amid the distractions of company and business, always be thinking of heavenly things; yet the desire, the frame, the propensity, the willingness to return to them we must, however difficult, endeavor to maintain.

The proper temper for prayer should precede the act. The disposition should be wrought in the mind before the exercise is begun. To bring a proud temper to an humble prayer, a luxurious habit to a self-denying prayer, or a worldly disposition to a spiritually minded prayer, is a positive anomaly. A habit is more powerful than an act, and a previously indulged temper during the day will not, it is to be feared, be fully counteracted by the exercise of a few minutes devotion at night.

Prayer is designed for a perpetual renovation of the motives to virtue; if therefore the cause is not followed by its consequence, a consequence inevitable but for the impediments we bring to it, we rob our nature of its highest privilege, and run the danger of incurring a penalty where we are looking for a blessing.

That the habitual tendency of the life should be the preparation for the stated prayer, is naturally suggested to us by our blessed Redeemer in his sermon on the Mount. He announced the precepts of holiness, and their corresponding beatitudes; he gave the spiritual exposition of the Law, the directions for almsgiving, the exhortation to love our enemies, nay the essence and spirit of the whole Decalogue, previous to his delivering his own divine prayer as a pattern for ours. Let us learn from this that the preparation of prayer is therefore to live in all those pursuits which we may safely beg of God to bless, and in a conflict with all those temptations into which we pray not to be led.

If God be the centre to which our hearts are tending, every line in our lives must meet in Him. With this point in view, there will be a harmony between our prayers and our practice, a consistency between devotion and conduct, which will make every part turn to this one end, bear upon this one point. For the beauty of the Christian scheme consists not in parts, (however good in themselves) which tend to separate views, and lead to different ends; but it arises from its being one entire, uniform, connected plan, "compacted of that which every joint supplieth," and of which all the parts terminate in this one grand ultimate point.

The design of prayer, therefore, as we before observed,
is not merely to make us devout while we are engaged in it, but that its odor may be diffused through all the intermediate spaces of the day, enter into all its occupations, duties, and tempers. Nor must its results be partial, or limited to easy and pleasant duties, but extend to such as are less alluring. When we pray, for instance, for our enemies, the prayer must be rendered practical, must be made a means of softening our spirit, and cooling our resentment toward them. If we deserve their enmity, the true spirit of prayer will put us upon endeavoring to cure the fault which has excited it. If we do not deserve it, it will put us on striving for a placable temper, and we shall endeavor not to let slip so favorable an occasion of cultivating it. There is no such softener of animosity, no such soother of resentment, no such allayer of hatred, as sincere, cordial prayer.

It is obvious, that the precept to pray without ceasing, can never mean to enjoin a continual course of actual prayer. But while it more directly enjoins us to embrace all proper occasions of performing this sacred duty, or rather of claiming this valuable privilege, so it plainly implies that we should try to keep up constantly that sense of the divine presence which shall maintain the disposition. In order to this, we should inure our minds to reflection; we should encourage serious thoughts. A good thought barely passing through the mind will make little impression on it. We must arrest it, constrain it to remain with us, expand, amplify, and as it were, take it to pieces. It must be distinctly unfolded, and carefully examined, or it will leave no precise idea; it must be fixed and incorporated, or it will produce no practical effect. We must not dismiss it till it has left some trace on the mind, till it has made some impression on the heart.

On the other hand, if we give the reins to a loose ungoverned fancy, at other times, if we abandon our minds to frivolous thoughts; if we fill them with corrupt images; if we cherish sensual ideas during the rest of the day, can we expect that none of these images will intrude, that none of these impressions will be revived, but that "the temple into which foul things" have been invited, will be cleansed at a given moment; that worldly thoughts will recede and give place at once, to pure and holy thoughts? Will that Spirit, grieved by impurity, or resisted by levity, return with his warm beams, and cheering influences, to the contaminated mansion from which he has been driven out? Is
it wonderful if finding no entrance into a heart filled with vanity he should withdraw himself?—We cannot, in retiring into our closets, change our natures as we do our clothes. The disposition we carry thither will be likely to remain with us. We have no right to expect that a new temper will meet us at the door. We can only hope that the spirit we bring thither will be cherished and improved. It is not easy, rather it is not possible, to graft genuine devotion on a life of an opposite tendency; nor can we delight ourselves regularly for a few stated moments, in that God whom we have not been serving during the day. We may, indeed, to quiet our conscience, take up the employment of prayer, but cannot take up the state of mind which will make the employment beneficial to ourselves, or the prayer acceptable to God, if all the previous day we have been careless of ourselves, and unmindful of our Maker. They will not pray differently from the rest of the world, who do not live differently.

What a contradiction is it to lament the weakness, the misery, and the corruption of our nature, in our devotions, and then to rush into a life, though not perhaps of vice, yet of indulgences, calculated to increase that weakness, to inflame those corruptions, and to lead to that misery! There is either no meaning in our prayers, or no sense in our conduct. In the one we mock God, in the other we deceive ourselves.

Will not he who keeps up an habitual intercourse with his Maker, who is vigilant in thought, self-denying in action, who strives to keep his heart from wrong desires, his mind from vain imaginations, and his lips from idle words, bring a more prepared spirit, a more collected mind, be more engaged, more penetrated, more present to the occasion? Will he not feel more delight in this devout exercise, reap more benefit from it, than he who lives at random, prays from custom, and who though he dares not intermit the form, is a stranger to its spirit. "O God my heart is ready," cannot be lawfully uttered by him who is no more prepared.

We speak not here to the self-sufficient formalist, or the careless profligate. Among those whom we now take the liberty to address, are to be found, especially in the higher class of females, the amiable and the interesting, and in many respects, the virtuous and correct: Characters so engaging, so evidently made for better things, so capable of reaching high degrees of excellence, so formed to give
the tone to Christian practice, as well as to fashion; so calculated to give a beautiful impression of that religion which they profess, without sufficiently adorning; which they believe without fairly exemplifying; that we cannot forbear taking a tender interest in their welfare, we cannot forbear breathing a fervent prayer, that they may yet reach the elevation for which they were intended; that they may hold out a uniform and consistent pattern, of "whatsoever things are pure, honest, just, lovely, and of good report!" This the Apostle goes on to intimate can only be done by thinking on these things. Things can only influence our practice as they engage our attention. Would not then a confirmed habit of serious thought tend to correct that inconsideration, which we are willing to hope, more than want of principle, lies at the bottom of the inconsistency we are lamenting.

If, as it is generally allowed, the great difficulty of our spiritual life is, to make the future predominate over the present, do we not by the conduct we are regretting, aggravate what it is in our power to diminish? Miscalcula-
tion of the relative value of things, is one of the greatest errors of our moral life. We estimate them in an inverse proportion to their value, as well as to their duration: we lavish earnest and durable thoughts on things so trifling, that they deserve little regard, so brief that they "perish with the using," while we bestow only slight attention on things of infinite worth, only transient thoughts on things of eternal duration.

Those who are so far conscientious as not to intermit a regular course of devotion, and who yet allow themselves at the same time to go on in a course of amusements, which excite a directly opposite spirit, are inconceivably augmenting their own difficulties. They are eagerly heaping up fuel in the day, on the fire which they intend to extinguish in the evening: they are voluntarily adding to the temptations, against which they mean to request grace to struggle. To acknowledge at the same time, that we find it hard to serve God as we ought, and yet to be systematically indulging habits, which must naturally increase the difficulty, makes our characters almost ridiculous, while it renders our duty almost im-
practicable.

While we make our way more difficult by those very indulgences with which we think to cheer and refresh it, the determined Christian becomes his own pioneer; he
makes his path easy by voluntarily clearing it of the obstacles which impede his progress.

These habitual indulgences seem a contradiction to that obvious law, that one virtue always involves another; for we cannot labor after any grace, that of prayer for instance, without resisting whatever is opposite to it. If then we lament, that it is so hard to serve God, let us not by our conduct furnish arguments against ourselves; for, as if the difficulty were not great enough in itself, we are continually heaping up mountains in our way, by indulging in such pursuits and passions, as make a small labor an insurmountable one.

But we may often judge better of our state by the result, than by the act of prayer. Our very defects, our coldness, deadness, wanderings, may leave more contrition on the soul, than the happiest turn of thought. The feeling of our wants, the confession of our sins, the acknowledgment of our dependence, the renunciation of ourselves, the supplication for mercy, the application to "the fountain opened for sin," the cordial entreaty for the aid of the Spirit, the relinquishment of our own will, resolutions of better obedience, petitions that these resolutions may be directed and sanctified, these are the subjects in which the supplicant should be engaged, by which his thoughts should be absorbed. Can they be so absorbed, if many of the intervening hours are passed in pursuits of a totally different complexion? pursuits which raise the passions which we are seeking to allay? Will the cherished vanities go at our bidding? Will the required dispositions come at our calling? Do we find our tempers so obedient, our passions so obsequious in the other concerns of life? If not, what reason have we to expect their obsequiousness in this grand concern. We should therefore endeavor to believe as we pray, to think as we pray, to feel as we pray, and to act as we pray. Prayer must not be a solitary, independent exercise; but an exercise interwoven with many, and inseparably connected with that golden chain of Christian duties, of which, when so connected, it forms one of the most important links.

Business however must have its period as well as devotion. We were sent into this world to act as well as to pray, active duties must be performed as well as devout exercises. Even relaxation must have its interval; only let us be careful that the indulgence of the one do not destroy the effect of the other, that our pleasures do not
encroach on the time or deaden the spirit of our devotions, let us be careful that our cares, occupations, and amusements may be always such that we may not be afraid to implore the divine blessing on them; this is the criterion of their safety and of our duty. Let us endeavor that in each, in all, one continually growing sentiment and feeling of loving, serving, and pleasing God, maintain its predominant station in the heart.

An additional reason why we should live in the perpetual use of prayer, seems to be, that our blessed Redeemer, after having given both the example and the command, while on earth, condescends still to be our unceasing intercessor in Heaven. Can we ever cease petitioning for ourselves, when we believe that he never ceases interceding for us?

If we are so unhappy as now to find little pleasure in this holy exercise, that however is so far from being a reason for discontinuing it, that it affords the strongest argument for perseverance. That which was at first a form, will become a pleasure; that which was a burden will become a privilege; that which we impose upon ourselves as a medicine, will become necessary as an aliment, and desirable as a gratification. That which is now short and superficial, will become copious and solid. The chariot wheel is warmed by its own motion. Use will make that easy which was at first painful. That which is once become easy will soon be rendered pleasant. Instead of repining at the performance, we shall be unhappy at the omission. When a man recovering from sickness attempts to walk, he does not discontinue the exercise because he feels himself weak, nor even because the effort is painful. He rather redoubles his exertion. It is from his perseverance that he looks for strength. An additional turn every day diminishes his repugnance, augments his vigor, improves his spirits. That effort which was submitted to because it was salutary, is continued because the feeling of renovated strength renders it delightful.
CHAP. VII.

The Love of God.

Our love to God arises out of want. God's love to us out of fulness. Our indigence draws us to that power which can relieve, and to that goodness which can bless us. His overflowing love delights to make us partakers of the bounties he graciously imparts, not only in the gifts of his Providence, but in the richer communications of his grace. We can only be said to love God, when we endeavor to glorify him, when we desire a participation of his nature, when we study to imitate his perfections.

We are sometimes inclined to suspect the love of God to us. We are too little suspicious of our want of love to him. Yet if we examine the case by evidence, as we should examine any common question, what real instances can we produce of our love to Him? What imaginable instance can we not produce of his love to us? If neglect, forgetfulness, ingratitude, disobedience, coldness in our affections, deadness in our duty, be evidences of our love to him, such evidences, but such only, we can abundantly allege. If life, and all the countless catalogue of mercies that makes life pleasant, be proofs of his love to us, these he has given us in hand;—if life eternal, if blessedness that knows no measure and no end, be proofs of love, these he has given us in promise—to the Christian, we had almost said, he has given them in possession.

It must be an irksome thing to serve a master, whom we do not love; a master whom we are compelled to obey, though we think his requisitions hard, and his commands unreasonable; under whose eye we know that we continually live, though his presence is not only undelightful but formidable.

Now every Christian must obey God, whether he love him or not; he must act always in his sight, whether he delight in him or not; and to a heart of any feeling, to a spirit of any liberality, nothing is so grating as constrained obedience. To love God, to serve him because we love him, is therefore no less our highest happiness, than our most bounden duty. Love makes all labor light. We serve with alacrity, where we love with cordiality.

Where the heart is devoted to an object, we require not
o be perpetually reminded of our obligations to obey him, hey present themselves spontaneously, we fulfil them readily, I had almost said, involuntarily; we think not so much of the service as of the object. The principle which suggests the work inspires the pleasure; to neglect it, would be an injury to our feelings. The performance is the gratification. The omission is not more a pain to the conscience, than a wound to the affections. The implantation of this vital root perpetuates virtuous practice, and secures internal peace.

Though we cannot be always thinking of God, we may be always employed in his service. There must be intervals of our communion with him, but there must be no intermission of our attachment to him. The tender father who labors for his children, does not always employ his thoughts about them; he cannot be always conversing with them, or concerning them, yet he is always engaged in promoting their interests. His affection for them is an inwoven principle, of which he gives the most unequivocal evidence, by the assiduousness of his application in their service.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,"
is the primary law of our religion. Yet how apt are we to complain that we cannot love God, that we cannot maintain a devout intercourse with him. But would God, who is all justice, have commanded that of which he knew we were incapable? Would he who is all mercy have made our eternal happiness to depend on something which he knew was out of our power to perform, capriciously disqualifying us for the duty he had prescribed? Would he have given the exhortation, and withheld the capacity? This would be to charge omniscience with folly, and infinite goodness with injustice—no, when he made duty and happiness inseparable, he neither made our duty impracticable, nor our happiness unattainable. But we are continually flying to false refuges, clinging to false holds, resting on false supports: as they are uncertain they disappoint us, as they are weak they fail us; but as they are numerous, when one fails, another presents itself. Till they slip from under us, we never suspect how much we rested upon them. Life glides away in a perpetual succession of these false dependencies and successive privations.

There is, as we have elsewhere observed, a striking analogy between the natural and spiritual life: the weakness and helplessness of the Christian resemble those of
the infant; neither of them becomes strong, vigorous, and full grown at once, but through a long and often painful course. This keeps up a sense of dependence, and accustoms us to lean on the hand which fosters us. There is in both conditions, an imperceptible chain of depending events, by which we are carried on insensibly to the vigor of maturity. The operation which is not always obvious, is always progressive. By attempting to walk alone, we discover our weakness, the experience of that weakness humbles us, and every fall drives us back to the sustaining hand, whose assistance we vainly flattered ourselves we no longer needed.

In some halcyon moments we are willing to persuade ourselves that religion has made an entire conquest over our heart; that we have renounced the dominion of the world, have conquered our attachment to earthly things. We flatter ourselves that nothing can now again obstruct our entire submission. But we know not what spirit we are of. We say this in the calm of repose and in the stillness of the passions; when our path is smooth, our prospect smiling, danger distant, temptation absent; when we have many comforts and no trials. Suddenly, some loss, some disappointment, some privation, tears off the mask, reveals us to ourselves. We at once discover, that though the smaller fibres and lesser roots which fasten us down to earth may have been loosened by preceding storms, yet our substantial hold on earth is not shaken, the tap root is not cut, we are yet fast rooted to the soil, and still stronger tempests must be sent to make us let go our hold.

It might be useful to cultivate the habit of stating our own case as strongly to ourselves as if it were the case of another; to express in so many words, thoughts which are not apt to assume any specific or palpable form; thoughts which we avoid shaping into language, but slur over, generalize, soften, and do away. How indignant, for instance, should we feel (though we ourselves make the complaint) to be told by others, that we do not love our maker and preserver. But let us put the question fairly to ourselves. Do we really love him? Do we love him with a supreme, nay, even with an equal affection? Is there no friend, no child, no reputation, no pleasure, no society, no possession which we do not prefer to him? It is easy to affirm in a general way that there is not. But let us particularize, individualize the question—bring it home to our own hearts in some actual instance, in some tangible shape.
Let us commune with our own consciences, with our own feelings, with our own experience; let us question pointedly, and answer honestly. Let us not be more ashamed to detect the fault, than to have been guilty of it.

This then will commonly be the result. Let the friend, child, reputation, possession, pleasure be endangered, but especially let it be taken away by some stroke of Providence. The scales fall from our eyes; we see, we feel, we acknowledge, with brokenness of heart, not only for our loss but for our sin, that though we did love God, yet we loved him not superlatively, and that we loved the blessing, threatened or resumed, still more. But this is one of the cases in which the goodness of God bringeth us to repentance. By the operation of his grace the resumption of the gift brings back the heart to the giver. The Almighty by his Spirit takes possession of the temple from which the idol is driven out: God is re-instituted in his rights, and becomes the supreme and undisputed Lord of our reverential affection.

There are three requisites to our proper enjoyment of every earthly blessing which God bestows on us—a thankful reflection on the goodness of the giver, a deep sense of the unworthiness of the receiver, and a sober recollection of the precarious tenure by which we hold it. The first would make us grateful, the second humble, the last moderate.

But how seldom do we receive his favors in this spirit! As if religious gratitude were to be confined to the appointed days of public thanksgiving, how rarely in common society do we hear any recognition of Omnipotence even on those striking and heart-rejoicing occasions, when “with his own right hand, and with his glorious arm, He has gotten himself the victory!” Let us never detract from the merit of our valiant leaders, but rather honor them the more for this manifestation of divine power in their favor; but let us never lose sight of Him “who teacheth their hands to war, and their fingers to fight.” Let us never forget that “He is the rock, that his work is perfect, and all his ways are judgment.”

How many seem to show not only their want of affiance in God, but that “he is not in all their thoughts,” by their appearing to leave him entirely out of their concerns, by projecting their affairs without any reference to him, by setting out on the stock of their own unassisted wisdom, contriving and acting independently of God; expecting
prosperity in the event, without seeking his direction in the outset, and taking to themselves the whole honor of the success without any recognition of his hand! do they not thus virtually imitate what Sophocles makes his blustering Atheist* boast. "Let other men expect to conquer with the assistance of the gods, I intend to gain honor without them."

The Christian will rather rejoice to ascribe the glory of his prosperity to the same hand to which our own manly queen gladly ascribed her signal victory. When after the defeat of the Armada, impiously termed invincible, her enemies, in order to lower the value of her agency, alleged that the victory was not owing to her, but to God who had raised the storm, she heroically declared that the visible interference of God in her favor, was that part of the success from which she derived the truest honor.

Incidents and occasions every day arise, which not only call on us to trust in God, but which furnish us with suitable occasions of vindicating, if I may presume to use the expression, the character and conduct of the Almighty in the government of human affairs; yet there is no duty which we perform with less alacrity. Strange, that we should treat the Lord of heaven and earth with less confidence than we exercise towards each other! That we should vindicate the honor of a common acquaintance with more zeal than that of our insulted maker and preserver!

If we hear a friend accused of any act of injustice, though we cannot bring any positive proof why he should be acquitted of this specific charge, yet we resent the injury offered to his character; we clear him of the individual allegation on the ground of his general conduct, inferring that, from the numerous instances we can produce of his rectitude on other occasions, he cannot be guilty of the alleged injustice. We reason from analogy, and in general we reason fairly. But when we presume to judge of the Most High, instead of vindicating his rectitude on the same grounds, under a providence seemingly severe; instead of reverting, as in the case of our friend, to the thousand instances we have formerly tasted of his kindness, instead of giving God the same credit we give to his erring creature, and inferring from his past goodness, that the present inexplicable dispensation must be consistent, though

* Ajax.
we cannot explain how, with his general character, we muti-

nously accuse him of inconsistency, nay of injustice. We admit virtually the most monstrous anomaly in the character

of the perfect God.

But what a clue has revelation furnished to the intricate

labyrinth which seems to involve the conduct which we

impiously question! It unrois the volume of divine Provi-
dence, lays open the mysterious Map of infinite wisdom, throws a bright light on the darkest dispensations, vindic-
cates the inequality of appearances, and points to that bles-

sed region, where to all who have truly loved and served

God, every apparent wrong shall be proved to have been

unimpeachably right, every affliction a mercy, and the

severest trials the choicest blessings.

So blind has sin made us, that the glory of God is con-

cealed from us, by the very means which, could we discern

aright, would display it. That train of second causes, which he has so marvelously disposed, obstructs our view

of himself. We are so filled with wonder at the immedi-

ate effect, that our short sight penetrates not to the first

cause. To see him as he is, is reserved to be the happi-

ness of a better world. We shall then indeed "admire

him in his Saints, and in all them that believe;" we shall see how necessary it was for those whose bliss is now so

perfect, to have been poor, and despised, and oppressed.
We shall see why the "ungodly were in such prosperity."

Let us give God credit here, for what we shall then fully

know; let us adore now, what we shall understand here-

after.

They who take up religion on a false ground will never
adhere to it. If they adopt it merely for the peace and

pleasantness it brings, they will desert it, as soon as they

find their adherence to it will bring them into difficulty,

distress, or discredit. It seldom answers, therefore, to

attempt making proselytes by hanging out false colors.

The Christian "endures as seeing him who is invisible." He who adopts religion, for the sake of immediate enjoy-

ment, will not do a virtuous action that is disagreeable to

himself; nor resist a temptation that is alluring, present

pleasure being his motive. There is no sure basis for vir-
tue but the love of God in Christ Jesus, and the bright

reversion for which that love is pledged. Without this, as

soon as the paths of piety become rough and thorny, we

shall stray into pleasanter pastures.

Religion however has her own peculiar advantages. In
the transaction of all worldly affairs, there are many and
great difficulties. There may be several ways out of which
to choose. Men of the first understanding are not always
certain which of these ways is the best. Persons of the
deepest penetration are full of doubt and perplexity; their
minds are undecided how to act, lest while they pursue
one road, they may be neglecting another, which might
better have conducted them to their proposed end.

In religion the case is different, and, in this respect,
easy. As a Christian can have but one object in view, he
is also certain there is but one way of attaining it. Where
there is but one end, it prevents all possibility of choosing
wrong; where there is but one road, it takes away all per-
plexity as to the course of pursuit. That we so often
wander wide of the mark, is not from any want of plainness
in the path, but from the perverseness of our will in not
choosing it, from the indolence of our minds, in not follow-
ing it up.

In our attachments to earthly things, even the most in-
ocent, there is always a danger of excess, but from this
danger we are here perfectly exempt, for there is no possi-
bility of excess in our love to that Being who has demanded
the whole heart. This peremptory requisition cuts off all
debate. Had God required only a portion, even were it a
large portion, we might be puzzled in settling the quantum.
We might be plotting how large a part we might venture
to keep back without absolutely forfeiting our safety; we
might be haggling for deductions, bargaining for abate-
ments, and be perpetually compromising with our Maker.
But the injunction is entire, the command is definite, the
portion is unequivocal. Though it is so compressed in the
expression, yet it is so expansive and ample in the measure;
it is so distinct a claim, so imperative a requisition of all
the faculties of the mind and strength; all the affections
of the heart and soul; that there is not the least opening
left for litigation; no place for any thing but absolute, un-
reserved compliance.

Every thing which relates to God is infinite. We must,
therefore, while we keep our hearts humble, keep our aims
high. Our highest services indeed are but finite, imper-
fect. But as God is unlimited in goodness, he should have
our unlimited love. The best we can offer is poor, but let
us not withhold that best. He deserves incomparably
more than we have to give. Let us not give him less than
all. If he has ennobled our corrupt nature with spiritual
affections, let us not refuse their noblest aspirations, to their noblest object. Let him not behold us so prodigally lavishing our affections on the meanest of his bounties, as to have nothing left for himself. As the standard of every thing in religion is high, let us endeavor to act in it with the highest intention of mind, with the largest use of our faculties. Let us obey him with the most intense love, adore him with the most fervent gratitude. Let us "praise him according to his excellent greatness." Let us serve him with all the strength of our capacity, with all the devotion of our will.

Grace being a new principle added to our natural powers, as it determines the desires to a higher object, so it adds vigor to their activity. We shall best prove its dominion over us by desiring to exert ourselves in the cause of heaven with the same energy with which we once exerted ourselves in the cause of the world. The world was too little to fill our whole capacity. Scaliger lamented how much was lost because so fine a poet as Claudian, in his choice of a subject, wanted matter worthy of his talents; but it is the felicity of the Christian to have chosen a theme to which all the powers of his heart and of his understanding will be found inadequate. It is the glory of religion to supply an object worthy of the entire consecration of every power, faculty, and affection of an immaterial, immortal being.

CHAP. VIII.

The hand of God to be acknowledged in the daily circumstances of life.

If we would indeed love God, let us "acquaint ourselves with him." The word of inspiration has assured us that there is no other way to "be at peace." As we cannot love an unknown God, so neither can we know him, or even approach toward that knowledge, but on the terms which he himself holds out to us; neither will he save us but in the method which he has himself prescribed. His very perfections, the just objects of our adoration, all stand in
the way of creatures so guilty. His justice is the flaming sword which excludes us from the paradise we have forfeited. His purity is so opposed to our corruptions, his omnipotence to our infirmity, his wisdom to our folly, that had we not to plead the great propitiation, those very attributes which are now our trust, would be our terror. The most opposite images of human conception, the widest extremes of human language, are used for the purpose of showing what God is to us, in our natural state, and what he is under the Christian dispensation. The "consuming fire" is transformed into essential love.

But as we cannot find out the Almighty to perfection, so we cannot love him with that pure flame, which animates glorified spirits. But there is a preliminary acquaintance with him, an initial love of him, for which he has furnished us with means by his works, by his word, and by his Spirit. Even in this weak and barren soil, some germs will shoot, some blossoms will open, of that celestial plant, which, watered by the dews of heaven, and ripened by the Sun of Righteousness, will, in a more genial clime, expand into the fulness of perfection, and bear immortal fruits in the paradise of God.

A person of a cold phlegmatic temper, who laments that he wants that fervor in his love of the supreme Being, which is apparent in more ardent characters, may take comfort, if he find the same indifference respecting his worldly attachments. But if his affections are intense towards the perishable things of earth, while they are dead to such as are spiritual, it does not prove that he is destitute of passions, but only that they are not directed to the proper object. If, however, he love God with that measure of feeling, with which God has endowed him, he will not be punished or rewarded, because the stock is greater or smaller than that of some other of his fellow creatures.

In those intervals, when our sense of divine things is weak and low, we must not give way to distrust, but warm our hearts with the recollection of our best moments. Our motives to love and gratitude are not now diminished, but our spiritual frame is lower, our natural spirits are weaker. Where there is languor there will be discouragements. But we must not desist. "Faint, yet pursuing," must be the Christian's motto.

There is more merit, (if ever we dare apply so arrogant a word to our worthless efforts) in persevering under depression and discomfort, than in the happiest flow of devo-
tion, when the tide of health and spirits runs high. Where there is less gratification, there is more disinterestedness. We ought to consider it as a cheering evidence, that our love may be equally pure though it is not equally fervent, when we persist in serving our heavenly father with the same constancy, though it may please him to withdraw from us the same consolations. Perseverance may bring us to the very dispositions the absence of which we are lamenting—"O tarry thou the Lord's leisure, be strong and he shall comfort thy heart."

We are too ready to imagine that we are religious because we know something of religion. We appropriate to ourselves, the pious sentiments we read, and we talk as if the thoughts of other men's heads were really the feelings of our own hearts. But piety has not its seat in the memory, but in the affections, for which however, the memory is an excellent purveyor, though a bad substitute. Instead of an undue elation of heart when we peruse some of the Psalmist's beautiful effusions, we should feel a deep self-abasement at the reflection, that however our case may sometimes resemble his, yet how inapplicable to our hearts are the ardent expressions of his repentance, the overflowing of his gratitude, the depth of his submission, the entireness of his self-dedication, the fervor of his love. But he who indeed can once say with him, "Thou art my portion," will, like him, surrender himself unreservedly to his service.

It is important that we never suffer our faith, any more than our love, to be depressed or elevated, by mistaking for its own operations, the ramblings of a busy imagination. The steady principle of faith must not look for its character to the vagaries of a mutable and fantastic fancy—La folle de la Maison, as she has been well denominated. Faith which has once fixed her foot on the immutable rock of ages, fastened her firm eye on the cross, and stretched out her triumphant hand to seize the promised crown, will not suffer her stability to depend on this ever-shifting faculty; she will not be driven to despair by the blackest shades of its pencil, nor be betrayed into a careless security, by its most flattering and vivid colors.

One cause of the fluctuations of our faith is, that we are too ready to judge the Almighty by our own low standard. We judge him not by his own declarations of what he is, and what he will do, but by our own feelings and practices. We ourselves are too little disposed to forgive those who
have offended us. We therefore conclude, that God cannot pardon our offences. We suspect him to be implacable, because we are apt to be so, and we are unwilling to believe that he can pass by injuries, because we find it so hard to do it. When we do forgive, it is grudgingly and superficially; we therefore infer that God cannot forgive freely and fully. We make a hypocritical distinction between forgiving and forgetting injuries. God clears away the score when he grants the pardon. He does not only say, "thy sins and thy iniquities will I forgive," but "I will remember no more."

We are disposed to urge the smallness of our offences, as a plea for their forgiveness; whereas God, to exhibit the boundlessness of his own mercy, has taught us to allege a plea directly contrary, "Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great." To natural reason, this argument of David is most extraordinary. But while he felt that the greatness of his own iniquity left him no resource, but in the mercy of God, he felt that God's mercy was greater even than his own sin. What a large, what a magnificent idea, does it give us of the divine power and goodness, that the believer, instead of pleading the smallness of his own offences, as a motive for pardon, pleads only the abundance of the divine compassion!

We are told that it is the duty of the Christian to "seek God." We assent to the truth of the proposition. Yet it would be less irksome to corrupt nature, in pursuit of this knowledge, to go a pilgrimage to distant lands, than to seek him within our own hearts. Our own heart is the true terra incognita; a land more foreign and unknown to us, than the regions of the polar circle: Yet that heart is the place, in which an acquaintance with God must be sought. It is there we must worship him, if we would worship him in spirit and in truth.

But, alas! the heart is not the home of a worldly man, it is scarcely the home of a Christian. If business and pleasure are the natural element of the generality; a dreary vacuity, sloth, and insensibility, too often worse than both, disincline, disqualified too many Christians for the pursuit.

I have observed, and I think I have heard others observe, that a common beggar had rather screen himself under the wall of a churchyard, if overtaken by a shower of rain, though the church doors stand invitingly open, than take shelter within it, while divine service is performing. It is
a less annoyance to him to be drenched with the storm, than to enjoy the convenience of a shelter and a seat, if he must enjoy them at the heavy price of listening to the sermon.

While we condemn the beggar, let us look into our own hearts; happy if we cannot there detect somewhat of the same indolence, indisposedness, and distaste to serious things! Happy, if we do not find, that we prefer not only our pleasures and enjoyments, but, I had almost said, our very pains, and vexations, and inconveniences, to communing with our Maker! Happy, if we had not rather be absorbed in our petty cares, and little disturbances, provided we can contrive to make them the means of occupying our thoughts, filling up our minds, and drawing them away from that devout intercourse, which demands the liveliest exercise of our rational powers, the highest elevation of our spiritual affections! Is it not to be apprehended, that the dread of being driven to this sacred intercourse, is one grand cause of that activity, and restlessness, which sets the world in such perpetual motion?

Though we are ready to express a general sense of our confidence in Almighty goodness, yet what definite meaning do we annex to the expression? What practical evidences have we to produce, that we really do trust him? Does this trust deliver us from worldly anxiety? Does it exonerate us from the same perturbation of spirits, which those endure, who make no such profession? Does it relieve the mind from doubt and distrust? Does it tranquilize the troubled heart, does it regulate its disorders, and compose its fluctuations? Does it soothe us under irritation? Does it support us under trials? Does it fortify us against temptations? Does it lead us to repose a full confidence in that Being whom we profess to trust? Does it produce in us "that work of righteousness which is peace," that effect of righteousness, which is "quietness and assurance for ever?" Do we commit ourselves and our concerns to God in word, or in reality? Does this implicit reliance simplify our desires? Does it induce us to credit the testimony of his word and the promises of his Gospel? Do we not even entertain some secret suspicions of his faithfulness and truth in our hearts, when we persuade others and try to persuade ourselves that we unreservedly trust him?

In the preceding chapter we endeavored to illustrate our want of love to God by our not being as forward to rindi-
cute the divine conduct as to justify that of an acquaintance. The same illustration may express our reluctance to trust in God. If a tried friend engage to do us a kindness, though he may not think it necessary to explain the particular manner in which he intends to do it, we repose on his word. Assured of the result, we are neither very inquisitive about the mode nor the detail. But do we treat our Almighty Friend with the same liberal confidence? Are we not murmuring because we cannot see all the process of his administration, and follow his movements step by step? Do we wait the developement of his plan, in full assurance that the issue will be ultimately good? Do we trust that he is as abundantly willing as able, to do more for us than we can ask or think, if by our suspicions we do not offend him, if by our infidelity we do not provoke him? In short, do we not think ourselves utterly undone, when we have only but Providence to trust to?

We are perhaps ready enough to acknowledge God in our mercies, nay, we confess him in the ordinary enjoyments of life. In some of these common mercies, as in a bright day, a refreshing shower, delightful scenery; a kind of sensitive pleasure, an hilarity of spirits, a sort of animal enjoyment, though of a refined nature, mixes itself with our devotional feelings; and though we confess and adore the bountiful Giver, we do it with a little mixture of self-complacency, and of human gratification, which he pardons and accepts.

But we must look for him in scenes less animating, we must acknowledge him on occasions less exhilarating, less sensibly gratifying. It is not only in his promises that God manifests his mercy. His threatenings are proofs of the same compassionate love. He threatens, not to punish, but by the warning, to snatch from the punishment.

We may also trace marks of his hand not only in the awful visitations of life, not only in the severer dispensations of his Providence, but in vexations so trivial that we should hesitate to suspect that they are providential appointments, did we not know that our daily life is made up of unimportant circumstances rather than of great events. As they are however of sufficient importance to exercise the christian tempers and affections, we may trace the hand of our heavenly Father in those daily little disappointments, and hourly vexations, which occur even in the most prosperous state and which are inseparable from the condition of humanity. We must trace that same bene-
icient hand, secretly at work for our purification, our correction, our weaning from life, in the imperfections and disagreeableness of those who may be about us, in the perverseness of those with whom we transact business, and in those interruptions which break in on our favorite engagements.

We are perhaps too much addicted to our innocent delights, or we are too fond of our leisure, of our learned, even of our religious leisure. But while we say it is good for us to be here, the divine vision is withdrawn, and we are compelled to come down from the mount. Or, perhaps, we do not improve our retirement to the purposes for which it was granted, and to which we had resolved to devote it, and our time is broken in upon to make us more sensible of its value. Or we feel a complacency in our leisure, a pride in our books; perhaps we feel proud of the good things we are intending to say, or meditating to write, or preparing to do. A check is necessary, yet it is given in a way almost imperceptible. The hand that gives it is unseen, is unsuspected, yet it is the same gracious hand which directs the more important events of life. An importunate application, a disqualifying, though not severe indisposition, a family avocation, a letter important to the writer, but unseasonable to us, breaks in on our projected privacy; calls us to a sacrifice of our inclination, to a renunciation of our own will. These incessant trials of temper, if well improved, may be more salutary to the mind, than the finest passage we had intended to read, or the sublimest sentiment we had fancied we should write.

Instead then of going in search of great mortifications, as a certain class of pious writers recommend, let us cheerfully bear, and diligently improve these inferior trials which God prepares for us. Submission to a cross which he inflicts, to a disappointment which he sends, to a contradiction of our self-love, which he appoints, is a far better exercise, than great penances of our own choosing. Perpetual conquests over impatience, ill temper and self-will, indicate a better spirit than any self-imposed mortifications. We may traverse oceans and scale mountains on uncommanded pilgrimages, without pleasing God; we may please him without any other exertion than by crossing our own will.

Perhaps you had been busying your imagination with some projected scheme, not only lawful, but laudable. The design was radically good, but the supposed value of
your own agency, might too much interfere, might a little taint the purity of your best intentions. The motives were so mixed that it was difficult to separate them. Sudden sickness obstructed the design. You naturally lament the failure, not perceiving that, however good the work might be for others, the sickness was better for yourself. An act of charity was in your intention, but God saw that your soul required the exercise of a more difficult virtue; that humility and resignation, that the patience, acquiescence, and contrition, of a sick bed, were more necessary for you. He accepts the meditated work as far as it was designed for his glory, but he calls his servant to other duties, which were more salutary for him, and of which the master was the better judge. He sets aside his work, and orders him to wait: the more difficult part of his task. As far as your motive was pure, you will receive the reward of your unperformed charity, though not the gratification of the performance. If it was not pure, you are rescued from the danger attending a right action performed on a worldly principle. You may be the better Christian, though one good deed is subtracted from your catalogue.

By a life of activity and usefulness, you had perhaps attracted the public esteem. An animal activity had partly stimulated your exertions. The love of reputation begins to mix itself with your better motives. You do not, it is presumed, act entirely, or chiefly for human applause; but you are too sensible to it. It is a delicious poison which begins to infuse itself into your purest cup. You acknowledge indeed the sublimity of higher motives, but do you never feel that, separated from this accompaniment of self, they would be too abstracted, too speculative, and might become too little productive both of activity and of sensible gratification. You begin to feel the human incentive necessary, and your spirits would flag if it were withdrawn.

This sensibility to praise would gradually tarnish the purity of your best actions. He who sees your heart, as well as your works, mercifully snatches you from the perils of prosperity. Malice is awakened. Your most meritorious actions are ascribed to the most corrupt motives. You are attacked just where your character is least vulnerable. The enemies whom your success raised up, are raised up by God, less to punish than to save you. We are far from meaning that he can ever be the author of evil; he does not excite or approve the calumny, but he uses your calumniators as instruments of your purification. Your fame
was too dear to you. It is a costly sacrifice, but God requires it. It must be offered up. You would gladly compound for any, for every other offering, but this is the offering he chooses: and while he graciously continues to employ you for his glory, he thus teaches you to renounce your own. He sends this trial as a test, by which you are to try yourself. He thus instructs you not to abandon your Christian exertions, but to elevate the principle which inspired them, to defecate it from all impure admixtures.

By thus stripping the most engaging employments of this dangerous delight, by infusing some drops of salutary bitterness into your sweetest draught, by some of these ill-tasted but wholesome mercies, he graciously compels us to return to himself. By taking away the stays by which we are perpetually propping up our frail delights, they fall to the ground. We are, as it were, driven back to Him, who condescends to receive us, after we have tried every thing else, and after every thing else has failed us, and though he knows we should not have returned to him if every thing else had not failed us. He makes us feel our weakness, that we may have recourse to his strength; he makes us sensible of our hitherto unperceived sins, that we may take refuge in his everlasting compassion.

CHAP. IX.

Christianity Universal in its Requisitions.

It is not unusual to see people get rid of some of the most awful injunctions, and emancipate themselves from some of the most solemn requisitions of Scripture, by affecting to believe that they do not apply to them. They consider them as belonging exclusively to the first age of the Gospel, and to the individuals to whom they were immediately addressed; consequently the necessity to observe them does not extend to persons under an established Christianity, to hereditary Christians.

These exceptions are particularly applied to some of the leading doctrines, so forcibly and repeatedly pressed in the Epistles. The reasoners endeavor to persuade themselves that it was only the Ephesians "who were dead in
trespasses and sins” — that it was only the Galatians who were enjoined “not to fulfil the lusts of the flesh” — that it was only the Philippians who were “enemies to the Cross of Christ.” They shelter themselves under the comfortable assurance of a geographical security. As they know that they are neither Ephesians, Galatians, nor Philippians, they have of course little or nothing to do with the reproofs, expostulations, or threatenings which were originally directed to the converts among those people. They console themselves with the belief that it was only these Pagans who “walked according to the course of this world” — who were “strangers from the covenants of promise” — “and who were without God in the world.”

But these self-satisfied critics would do well to learn that not only “circumcision nor uncircumcision,” but baptism or no baptism “availeth nothing” (I mean at a mere form) “but a new creature.” An irreligious professor of Christianity is as much a stranger and foreigner, as a heathen; he is no more “a fellow citizen of the saints,” and of the household of God “than a Colossian or Galatian was, before the Christian dispensation had reached them.”

But if the persons to whom the Apostles preached, had, before their conversion, no vices to which we are not liable, they had certainly difficulties afterwards from which we are happily exempt. There were indeed differences between them and us in external situations, in local circumstances, references to which we ought certainly to take into the account in perusing the Epistles. We allow that they were immediately, but we do not allow that they were exclusively, applicable to them. It would have been too limited an object for inspiration to have confined its instructions to any one period, when its purpose was the conversion and instruction of the whole unborn world.

That these converts were miraculously “called out of darkness into the marvellous light of the Gospel” — that they were changed from gross blindness to a rapid illumination — that the embracing the new faith exposed them to persecution, reproach and ignominy — that the few had to struggle against the world — that laws, principalities and powers which support our faith opposed theirs — these are distinctions of which we ought not to lose sight: nor should we forget that not only all the disadvantages lay on their side in their antecedent condition, but that also all the superiority lies on ours in that which is subsequent.
But however the condition of the external state of the Church might differ, there can be no necessity for any difference in the interior state of the individual Christian. On whatever high principles of devotedness to God and love to man, they were called to act, we are called to act on precisely the same. If their faith was called to more painful exertions, if their self-denial to harder sacrifices, if their renunciation of earthly things to severer trials, let us thankfully remember this would naturally be the case, at the first introduction of a religion which had to combat with the pride, prejudices and enmity of corrupt nature, invested with temporal power: — That the hostile party would not fail to perceive how much the new religion opposed itself to their corruptions, and that it was introducing a spirit which was in direct and avowed hostility to the spirit of the world.

But while we are deeply thankful for the diminished difficulties of an established faith, let us never forget that Christianity allows of no diminution in the temper, of no abatement in the spirit, which constituted a Christian in the first ages of the Church.

Christianity is precisely the same religion now as it was when our Saviour was upon earth. The spirit of the world is exactly the same now as it was then. And if the most eminent of the Apostles, under the immediate guidance of inspiration, were driven to lament their conflicts with their own corrupt nature, the power of temptation, combining with their natural propensities to evil, how can we expect that a lower faith, a slackened zeal, an abated diligence, and an inferior holiness will be accepted in us? Believers then, were not called to higher degrees of purity, to a more elevated devotion, to a deeper humility, to greater rectitude, patience and sincerity than they are called to in the age in which we live. The promises are not limited to the period in which they were made, the aid of the Spirit is not confined to those on whom it was first poured out. It was expressly declared, by St. Peter, on its first effusion, to be promised not only "to them and to their children, but to all who were afar off, even to as many as the Lord their God should call."

If then the same salvation be now offered as was offered at first, is it not obvious that it must be worked out in the same way? And as the same Gospel retains the same authority in all ages, so does it maintain the same universality among all ranks. Christianity has no bye laws, no partic-
ular exemptions, no individual immunities. That there is no appropriate way of attaining salvation for a prince or a philosopher, is probably one reason why greatness and wisdom have so often rejected it. But if rank cannot plead its privileges, genius cannot claim its distinctions. That Christianity does not owe its success to the arts of rhetoric or the sophistry of the schools, but that God intended by it "to make foolish the wisdom of this world," actually explains why "the disputers of this world" have always been its enemies.

It would have been unworthy of the infinite God to have imparted a partial religion. There is but one "gate," and that a "strait" one; but one "way," and that a "narrow" one; there is but one salvation, and that a common one. The Gospel enjoins the same principles of love and obedience on all of every condition; offers the same aids under the same exigencies; the same supports under all trials; the same pardon to all penitents; the same Saviour to all believers; the same rewards to all who "endure to the end." The temptations of one condition and the trials of another may call for the exercise of different qualities, for the performance of different duties, but the same personal holiness is enjoined on all. External acts of virtue may be promoted by some circumstances, and impeded by others, but the graces of inward piety are of universal force, are of eternal obligation.

The universality of its requisitions is one of its most distinguishing characteristics. In the Pagan world it seemed sufficient that a few exalted spirits, a few fine geniuses should soar to a vast superiority above the mass; but it was never expected that the mob of Rome or Athens, should aspire to any religious sentiments or feelings in common with Socrates or Epictetus. I say religious sentiments, because in matters of taste the distinctions were less striking, for the mob of Athens were competent critics in the dramatic art, while they were sunk in the most stupid and degrading idolatry. As to those of a higher class, while no subject in science, arts, or learning was too lofty or too abstruse for their acquisition, no object in nature was too low, no conception of a depraved imagination was too impure for their worship. While the civil and political wisdom of the Romans was carried to such perfection that their code of laws has still a place in the most enlightened countries, their deplorably gross superstitions, rank them, in point of religion, with the savages of Africa. It shows
how little a way that reason which manifested itself with such unrivalled vigor in their poets, orators and historians, as to make them still models to ours, could go in what related to religion, when these polished people in the objects of their worship are only on a par with the inhabitants of Otaheite.

It furnishes the most incontrovertible proof that the world by wisdom knew not God, that it was at the very time, and in the very country, in which knowledge and taste had attained their utmost perfection, when the Porch and the Academy had given laws to human intellect, that atheism first assumed a shape, and established itself into a school of philosophy. It was at the moment when the mental powers were carried to the highest pitch in Greece, that it was settled as an infallible truth in this philosophy that the senses were the highest natural light of mankind. It was in the most enlightened age of Rome that this atheistical philosophy was transplanted thither, and that one of her most elegant poets adopted it, and rendered it popular by the bewitching graces of his verse.

It seems as if the most accomplished nations stood in the most pressing need of the light of revelation; for it was not to the dark and stupid corners of the earth that the Apostles had their earliest missions. One of St. Paul's first and noblest expositions of Christian truth, was made before the most august deliberative assembly in the world, though, by the way, it does not appear that more than one member of Areopagus was converted. In Rome some of the Apostle's earliest converts belonged to the imperial palace.—It was to the metropolis of cultivated Italy, it was to the "regions of Achaia," to the opulent and luxurious city of Corinth, in preference to the barbarous countries of the uncivilized world, that some of his first Epistles were addressed.

Even natural religion was little understood by those who professed it; it was full of obscurity till viewed by the clear light of the Gospel. Not only natural religion remained to be clearly comprehended, but reason itself remained to be carried to its highest pitch in the countries where revelation is professed. Natural religion could not see itself by its own light, reason could not extricate itself from the labyrinth of error and ignorance in which false religion had involved the world. Grace has raised nature. Revelation has given a lift to reason, and taught her to despise the follies and corruptions which obscured her
brightness. If nature is now delivered from darkness, it was the helping hand of revelation which raised her from the rubbish in which she lay buried.

Christianity has not only given us right conceptions of God, of his holiness, of the way in which he will be worshipped: it has not only given us principles to promote our happiness here, and to insure it hereafter; but it has really taught us what a proud philosophy arrogates to itself, the right use of reason. It has given us those principles of examining and judging, by which we are enabled to determine on the absurdity of false religions. "For to what else can it be ascribed," says the sagacious Bishop Sherlock, "that in every nation that names the name of Christ, even reason and nature see and condemn the follies, to which others are still, for want of the same help, held in subjection?"

Allowing however that Plato and Antoninus seemed to have been taught of heaven, yet the object for which we contend is, that no provision was made for the vulgar. While a faint ray shone on the page of philosophy, the people were involved in darkness which might be felt. The million were left to live without knowledge and to die without hope. For what knowledge or what hope would be acquired from the preposterous though amusing, and in many respects elegant mythology which they might pick up in their poets, the belief of which seemed to be confin ed to the populace.

But there was no common principle of hope or fear, of faith or practice, no motive of consolation, no bond of charity, no communion of everlasting interests, no reversionary equality between the wise and the ignorant, the master and the slave, the Greek and the Barbarian.

A religion was wanted which should be of general application. Christianity happily accommodated itself to the common exigence. It furnished an adequate supply to the universal want. Instead of perpetual but unexpiating sacrifices to appease imaginary deities,

Gods such as guilt makes welcome,

it presents "one oblation once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." It presents one consistent scheme of morals growing out of one uniform system of doctrines; one perfect rule of practice depending on one principle of
faith; it offers grace to direct the one and to assist the other. It encircles the whole sphere of duty with the broad and golden zone of coalescing charity, stamped with the inscription, "a new commandment give I unto you, that you love one another." Christianity, instead of destroying the distinctions of rank, or breaking in on the regulations of society, by this universal precept, furnishes new fences to its order, additional security to its repose, and fresh strength to its subordinations.

Were this command, so inevitably productive of that peculiarly Christian injunction of "doing to others as we would they should do unto us," uniformly observed, the whole frame of society would be cemented and consolidated into one indissoluble bond of universal brotherhood. This divinely enacted law is the seminal principle of justice, charity, patience, forbearance, in short, of all social virtue. That it does not produce these excellent effects, is not owing to any defect in the principle, but in our corrupt nature, which so reluctantly, so imperfectly obeys it. If it were conscientiously adopted, and substantially acted upon, received in its very spirit, and obeyed from the ground of the heart, human laws might be abrogated, courts of justice abolished, and treatises of morality burnt; war would be no longer an art, nor military tactics a science. We should suffer long and be kind, and so far from "seeking that which is another's," we should not even "seek our own."

But let not the soldier or the lawyer be alarmed. Their craft is in no danger. The world does not intend to act upon the divine principle which would injure their professions; and till this only revolution which good men desire, actually takes place, our fortunes will not be secure without the exertions of the one, nor our lives without the protection of the other.

All the virtues have their appropriate place and rank in Scripture. They are introduced as individually beautiful, and as reciprocally connected, like the graces in the mythologic dance. But perhaps no Christian grace ever sat to the hand of a more consummate master than charity. Her incomparable painter, St. Paul, has drawn her at full length in all her fair proportions. Every attitude is full of grace, every lineament, of beauty. The whole delineation is perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Who can look at this finished piece without blushing at his own want of likeness to it? Yet if this conscious
dissimilitude induce a cordial desire of resemblance, the humiliation will be salutary. Perhaps a more frequent contemplation of this exquisite figure, accompanied with earnest endeavors for a growing resemblance, would gradually lead us, not barely to admire the portrait, but would at length assimilate us to the divine original.

CHAP. X.

Christian Holiness.

Christianity, then, as we have attempted to show in the preceding chapter, exhibits no different standards of goodness applicable to different stations or characters. No one can be allowed to rest in a low degree and plead his exemption for aiming no higher. No one can be secure in any state of piety below that state which would not have been enjoined on all, had not all been entitled to the means of attaining it.

Those who keep their pattern in their eye, though they may fail of the highest attainments, will not be satisfied with such as are low. The striking inferiority will excite compunction; compunction will stimulate them to press on, which those never do, who, losing sight of their standard, are satisfied with the height they have reached.

He is not likely to be the object of God's favor, who takes his determined stand on the very lowest step in the scale of perfection; who does not even aspire above it, whose aim seems to be, not so much to please God as to escape punishment. Many however will doubtless be accepted, though their progress has been small; their difficulties may have been great, their natural capacity weak, their temptations strong, and their instruction defective.

Revelation has not only furnished injunctions but motives to holiness; not only motives, but examples and authorities. "Be ye therefore perfect" (according to your measure and degree) "as your father which is in heaven is perfect." And what says the Old Testament? It accords with the New—"Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy."

This was the injunction of God himself, not given exclu-
sively to Moses, to the leader and legislator, or to a few distinguished officers, or to a selection of eminent men, but to an immense body of people, even to the whole assembled host of Israel; to men of all ranks, professions, capacities, and characters; to the minister of religion, and to the uninstructed, to enlightened rulers, and to feeble women. "God," says an excellent writer, "had antecedently given to his people particular laws suited to their several exigencies, and various conditions, but the command to be holy was a general (might he not have said a universal) law.

"Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" This is perhaps the sublimest apostrophe of praise, (rendered more striking by its interrogatory form,) which the Scriptures have recorded. It makes a part of the first song of gratulation which is to be found in the treasury of sacred poetry. This epithet of holy is more frequently affixed to the name of God than any other. His mighty name is less often invoked, than his holy name. To offend against this attribute is represented as more heinous than to oppose any other. It has been remarked that the impiety of the Assyrian monarch is not described by his hostility against the great, the Almighty God, but it is made an aggravation of his crime that he had committed it against the Holy One of Israel.

When God condescended to give a pledge for the performance of his promise, he swears by his holiness, as if it were the distinguishing quality which was more especially binding. It seems connected and interwoven with all the divine perfections. Which of his excellences can we contemplate as separated from this? Is not his justice stamped with sanctity? It is free from any tincture of vindictiveness, and is therefore a holy justice. His mercy has none of the partiality or favoritism, or capricious fondness of human kindness, but is a holy mercy. His holiness is not more the source of his mercies than of his punishments. If his holiness in his severities to us wanted a justification, there cannot be at once a more substantial and more splendid illustration of it than the noble passage already quoted, for he is called "glorious in holiness," immediately after he had vindicated the honor of his name, by the miraculous destruction of the army of Pharaoh.

Is it not then a necessary consequence growing out of

* Saurin.
his perfections, "that a righteous God loveth righteousness," that he will of course require in his creatures a desire to imitate as well as to adore that attribute by which He himself loves to be distinguished? We cannot indeed, like God, be essentially holy. In an infinite being it is a substance, in a created being it is only an accident. God is the essence of holiness, but we can have no holiness, nor any other good thing, but what we derive from him—it is his prerogative, but our privilege.

If God loves holiness because it is his image, he must consequently hate sin because it defaces his image. If he glorifies his own mercy and goodness in rewarding virtue, he no less vindicates the honor of his holiness in the punishment of vice.—A perfect God can no more approve of sin in his creatures than he can commit it himself. He may forgive sin on his own conditions, but there are no conditions on which he can be reconciled to it. The infinite goodness of God may delight in the beneficial purposes to which his infinite wisdom has made the sins of his creatures subservient, but sin itself will always be abhorrent to his nature. His wisdom may turn it to a merciful end, but his indignation at the offence cannot be diminished. He loves man, for he cannot but love his own work; He hates sin for that was man's own invention, and no part of the work which God had made. Even in the imperfect administration of human laws, impunity of crimes would be construed into approbation of them.*

The law of holiness then, is a law binding on all persons without distinction, not limited to the period nor to the people to whom it was given. It reaches through the whole Jewish dispensation, and extends with wider demands and higher sanctions, to every Christian, of every denomination, of every age, and every country.

A more sublime motive cannot be assigned why we should be holy than because "the Lord our God is holy." Men of the world have no objection to the terms virtue, morality, integrity, rectitude, but they associate something overacted, not to say hypocritical, with the term holiness, and neither use it in a good sense when applied to others, nor would wish to have it applied to themselves, but make it over, with a little suspicion, and not a little derision, to puritans and enthusiasts.

This suspected epithet however is surely rescued from every injurious association, if we consider it as the chosen

* Note—See Charnock on the Attributes.
attribute of the Most High. We do not presume to apply
the terms virtue, probity, morality, to God, but we ascribe
holiness to him because he first ascribed it to Himself, as
the aggregate and consummation of all his perfections.

Shall so imperfect a being as man then, ridicule the ap-
lication of this term to others, or be ashamed of it him-
self? There is a cause indeed which should make him
ashamed of the appropriation, that of not deserving it.
This comprehensive appellation includes all the Christian
graces, all the virtues in their just proportion, order, and
harmony; in all their bearings, relations, and dependen-
ces. And as in God, glory and holiness are united, so
the Apostle combines "sanctification and honor" as the
glory of man.

Traces more or less of the holiness of God, may be
found in his works, to those who view them with the eye
of faith: they are more plainly visible in his providences;
but it is in his word that we must chiefly look for the man-
ifestations of his holiness. He is every where described
as perfectly holy in himself, as a model to be imitated by
his creatures, and, though with an interval immeasurable,
as imitable by them.

The great doctrine of redemption is inseparably con-
ected with the doctrine of sanctification. As an ad-
mirable writer has observed, "if the blood of Christ re-
concile us to the justice of God, the spirit of Christ is to
reconcile us to the holiness of God." When we are told
therefore that Christ is made unto us "righteousness,"
we are in the same place taught that he is made unto us
sanctification; that is, he is both justifier and sanctifier.
In vain shall we deceive ourselves by resting on his sac-
ifice, while we neglect to imitate his example.

The glorious spirits which surround the throne of God
are not represented as singing hallelujahs to his omnipo-
tence, nor even to his mercy, but to that attribute which,
as with a glory, encircles all the rest. They perpetually
cry Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, and it is observ-
able, that the angels which adore him for his holiness are
the ministers of his justice. Those pure intelligences per-
ceive, no doubt, that this union of attributes constitutes
the divine perfection.

This infinitely blessed Being then, to whom angels and
archangels, and all the hosts of heaven are continually as-
cribing holiness; has commanded us to be holy. To be
holy because God is holy, is both an argument and a com-
mand. An argument founded on the perfections of God, and a command to imitate Him. This command is given to creatures, fallen indeed, but to whom God graciously promises strength for the imitation. If in God holiness implies an aggregate of perfections; in man, even in his low degree, it is an incorporation of the Christian graces.

The holiness of God indeed is confined by no limitation; ours is bounded, finite, imperfect. Yet let us be sedulous to extend our little sphere. Let our desires be large, though our capacities are contracted. Let our aims be lofty, though our attainments are low. Let us be solicitous that no day pass without some augmentation of our holiness, some added height in our aspirations, some wider expansion in the compass of our virtues. Let us strive every day for some superiority to the preceding day, something that shall distinctly mark the passing scene with progress; something that shall inspire an humble hope that we are rather less unfit for heaven to-day, than we were yesterday. The celebrated artist who has recorded that he passed no day without drawing a line, drew it not for repetition but for progress; not to produce a given number of strokes, but to forward his work, to complete his design. The Christian, like the painter, does not draw his lines at random, he has a model to imitate, as well as an outline to fill. Every touch conforms him more and more to the great original. He who has transfused most of the life of God into his soul, has copied it most successfully.

"To seek happiness," says one of the fathers, "is to desire God, and to find him is that happiness." Our very happiness therefore is not our independent property: it flows from that eternal mind which is the source and sum of happiness. In vain we look for felicity in all around us. It can only be found in that original fountain, whence we, and all we are and have, are derived. Where then is the imaginary wise man of the school of Zeno? What is the perfection of virtue supposed by Aristotle? They have no existence but in the romance of philosophy. Happiness must be imperfect in an imperfect state. Religion, it is true, is initial happiness, and points to its perfection: but as the best men possess it but imperfectly, they can not be perfectly happy. Nothing can confer completeness which is itself incomplete. "With Thee, O Lord, is the fountain of life, and in thy light only we shall see light." *

* See Leighton on Happiness.
Whatever shall still remain wanting in our attainments, and much will still remain, let this last, greatest, highest consideration, stimulate our languid exertions, that God has negatively promised the beatific vision, the enjoyment of his presence, to this attainment, by specially proclaiming, that without holiness no man shall see his face. To know God, is the rudiments of that eternal life which will hereafter be perfected by seeing him.—As there is no stronger reason why we must not look for perfect happiness in this life, than because there is no perfect holiness, so the nearer advances we make to the one, the greater progress we shall make towards the other; we must cultivate here those tendencies and tempers which must be carried to perfection in a happier clime. But as holiness is the concomitant of happiness, so must it be its precursor. As sin has destroyed our happiness, so sin must be destroyed before our happiness can be restored. Our nature must be renovated before our felicity can be established. This is according to the nature of things as well as agreeable to the law and will of God. Let us then carefully look to the subduing in our inmost hearts, all those dispositions that are unlike God, all those actions, thoughts and tendencies that are contrary to God.

Independently therefore of all the other motives to holiness which religion suggests; independently of the fear of punishment, independently even of the hope of glory, let us be holy from this ennobling, elevating motive, because the Lord our God is holy. And when our virtue flags, let it be renovated by this imperative injunction, backed by this irresistible argument. The motive for imitation, and the Being to be imitated, seem almost to identify us with infinity. It is a connection which endears, an assimilation which dignifies, a resemblance which elevates. The apostle has added to the prophet an assurance which makes the crown and consummation of the promise, “that though we know not yet what we shall be, yet we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

In what a beautiful variety of glowing expressions, and admiring strains, do the scripture worthies delight to represent God; not only in relation to what he is to them, but to the supreme excellence of his own transcendent perfections! They expatiate, they amplify, they dwell with unwearied iteration on the adorable theme; they ran-sack language, they exhaust all the expressions of praise
and wonder, and admiration, all the images of astonishment
and delight, to laud and magnify his glorious name. They
praise him, they bless him, they worship him, they glorify
him, they give thanks to him for his great glory, saying,
"holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth
are full of the majesty of thy glory."

They glorify him relatively to themselves. "I will mag-
nify Thee, O Lord my strength—My help cometh of God
—The Lord himself is the portion of my inheritance."

At another time, soaring with a noble disinterestedness,
and quite losing sight of self and all created glories, they
adore him for his own incommunicable excellences. "Be
Thou exalted, O God, in thine own strength."—"Oh, the
depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of
God!" Then bursting to a rapture of adoration, and
burning with a more intense flame, they cluster his attrib-
utes—"To the King eternal, immortal, invisible, be honor
and glory for ever and ever." One is lost in admiration of
his wisdom—his ascription is, "to the only wise God."

Another in triumphant strains overflows with transport at
the consideration of the attribute on which we have been
descanting—"O Lord, who is like unto Thee, there is
none holy as the Lord." "Sing praises unto the Lord, oh
ye saints of his, and give thanks unto him for a remem-
brance of his holiness."

The prophets and apostles were not deterred from pour-
ing out the overflowings of their fervent spirits, they were
not restrained from celebrating the perfections of their
Creator, through the cold-hearted fear of being reckoned
enthusiasts. The saints of old were not prevented from
breathing out their rapturous hosannas to the King of
saints, through the coward dread of being branded as
fanatical. The conceptions of their minds dilating with
the view of the glorious constellation of the divine attrib-
utes; and the affections of their hearts warming with the
thought, that those attributes were all concentrated in
Mercy,—they display a sublime oblivion of themselves,—
they forget every thing but God. Their own wants dwindle
to a point. Their own concerns, nay the universe itself,
shrink into nothing. They seem absorbed in the effulgence
of Deity, lost in the radiant beams of infinite glory.
SMALL FAULTS AND VIRTUES.

CHAP. XI

On the comparatively small Faults and Virtues

The "fishers of men," as if exclusively bent on catching the greater sinners, often make the interstices of the moral net so wide, that it cannot retain those of more ordinary size, which every where abound. Their draught might be more abundant, were not the meshes so large that the smaller sort, aided by their own lubricity, escape the toils and slip through. Happy to find themselves not bulky enough to be entangled, they plunge back again into their native element, enjoy their escape, and hope they may safely wait to grow bigger before they are in danger of being caught.

It is of more importance than we are aware, or are willing to allow, that we take care diligently to practise the smaller virtues, avoid scrupulously the lesser sins, and bear patiently inferior trials; for the sin of habitually yielding, or the grace of habitually resisting, in comparatively small points, tends in no inconsiderable degree to produce that vigor or that debility of mind, on which hangs victory or defeat.

Conscience is moral sensation. It is the hasty perception of good and evil, the peremptory decision of the mind to adopt the one or avoid the other. Providence has furnished the body with senses, and the soul with conscience, as a tact by which to shrink from the approach of danger; as a prompt feeling to supply the deductions of reasoning; as a spontaneous impulse to precede a train of reflections for which the suddenness and surprise of the attack allow no time. An enlightened conscience, if kept tenderly alive, by a continual attention to its admonitions, would especially preserve us from those smaller sins, and stimulate us to those lesser duties which we are falsely apt to think are too insignificant to be brought to the bar of religion, too trivial to be weighed by the standard of scripture.

By cherishing this quick feeling of rectitude, light and sudden as the flash from heaven, and which is in fact the motion of the spirit, we intuitively reject what is wrong before we have time to examine why it is wrong; and seize on what is right before we have time to examine why it is right. Should we not then be careful how we extinguish
this sacred spark? Will any thing be more likely to extinguish it, than to neglect its hourly mementos to perform the smaller duties, and to avoid the lesser faults, which, as they in a good measure make up the sum of human life, will naturally fix and determine our character, that creature of habits? Will not our neglect or observance of it, incline or indispose us for those more important duties, of which these smaller ones are connecting links?

The vices derive their existence from wildness, confusion, disorganization. The discord of the passions is owing to their having different views, conflicting aims, and opposite ends. The rebellious vices have no common head; each is all to itself. They promote their own operations by disturbing those of others, but in disturbing they do not destroy them. Though they are all of one family, they live on no friendly terms. Profligacy hates covetousness as much as if it were a virtue. The life of every sin is a life of conflict, which occasions the torment, but not the death of its opposite. Like the fabled brood of the serpent, the passions spring up, armed against each other, but they fail to complete the resemblance, for they do not effect their mutual destruction.

But without union the Christian graces could not be perfected, and the smaller virtues are the threads and filaments which gently but firmly tie them together. There is an attractive power in goodness which draws each part to the other. This concord of the virtues is derived from their having one common centre in which all meet. In vice there is a strong repulsion. Though bad men seek each other, they do not love each other. Each seeks the other in order to promote his own purposes, while he hates him by whom his purposes are promoted.

The lesser qualities of the human character are like the lower people in a country; they are numerically, if not individually, important. If well-regulated, they become valuable from that very circumstance of numbers which, under a negligent administration, renders them formidable. The peace of the individual mind and of the nation, is materially affected by the discipline in which these inferior orders are maintained. Laxity and neglect, in both cases, are subversive of all good government.

But if we may be allowed to glance from earth to heaven, perhaps the beauty of the lesser virtues may be still better illustrated by that long and luminous track made up of minute and almost imperceptible stars, which though sepa-
rately too inconsiderable to attract attention, yet from their number and confluence, form that soft and shining stream of light every where discernible, and which always corresponds to the same fixed stars, as the smaller virtues do to their concomitant great ones. Without pursuing the metaphor to the classic fiction that the galaxy was the road through which the ancient heroes went to heaven, may we not venture to say that Christians will make their way thither more pleasant by the consistent practice of the minuter virtues?

Every Christian should consider religion as a fort which he is called to defend. The meanest soldier in the army, if he add patriotism to valor, will fight as earnestly as if the glory of the contest depended on his single arm. But he brings his watchfulness as well as his courage into action. He strenuously defends every pass he is appointed to guard, without inquiring whether it be great or small. There is not any defect in religion or morals so little as to be of no consequence. Worldly things may be little, because their aim and end may be little. Things are great or small, not according to their ostensible importance, but according to the magnitude of their object, and the importance of their consequences.

The acquisition of even the smallest virtue, being, as has been before observed, an actual conquest over the opposite vice, doubles our moral strength. The spiritual enemy has one subject less, and the conqueror one virtue more.

By allowed negligence in small things, we are not aware how much we injure religion in the eye of the world. How can we expect people to believe that we are in earnest in great points, when they see that we cannot withstand a trivial temptation, against which resistance would have been comparatively easy? At a distance they hear with respect of our general characters. They become domesticated with us, and discover the same failings, littlenesses, and bad tempers, as they have been accustomed to meet with in the most ordinary persons.

If Milton, in one of his letters to a learned foreigner who had visited him, could congratulate himself on the consciousness that in that visit he had been found equal to his reputation, and had supported in private conversation his high character as an author; shall not the Christian be equally anxious to support the credit of his holy profession, by not betraying in familiar life, any temper inconsistent with religion?
It is not difficult to attract respect on great occasions, where we are kept in order by knowing that the public eye is fixed upon us. It is easy to maintain a regard to our dignity in a "Symposiac, or an academical dinner;" but to labor to maintain it in the recesses of domestic privacy, requires more watchfulness, and is no less the duty, than it will be the habitual practice, of the consistent Christian.

Our neglect of inferior duties is particularly injurious to the minds of our dependents and servants. If they see us "weak and infirm of purpose," peevish, irresolute, capricious, passionate, or inconsistent, in our daily conduct, which comes under their immediate observation, and which comes also within their power of judging, they will not give us credit for those higher qualities which we may possess, and those superior duties which we may be more careful to fulfil. Neither their capacity, nor their opportunities, may enable them to judge of the orthodoxy of the head; but there will be obvious and decisive proofs to the meanest capacity, of the state and temper of the heart. Our greater qualities will do them little good, while our lesser but incessant faults do them much injury. Seeing us so defective in the daily course of domestic conduct, though they will obey us because they are obliged to it, they will neither love nor esteem us enough to be influenced by our advice, nor to be governed by our instructions, on those great points which every conscientious head of a family will be careful to inculcate on all about him. It demands no less circumspection to be a Christian, than to be "a hero, to one's valet de chambre."

In all that relates to God and to himself, the Christian knows of no small faults. He considers all allowed and wilful sins, whatever be their magnitude, as an offence against his Maker. Nothing that offends him can be insignificant. Nothing that contributes to fasten on ourselves a wrong habit can be trifling. Faults which we are accustomed to consider as small, are repeated without compunction. The habit of committing them is confirmed by the repetition. Frequency renders us at first indifferent, then insensible. The hopelessness attending a long indulged custom, generates carelessness, till, for want of exercise, the power of resistance is first weakened, then destroyed.

But there is a still more serious point of view in which the subject may be considered. Do small faults, continually repeated, always retain their original diminutiveness?
Is any axiom more established, than that all evil is of a progressive nature? Is a bad temper which is never repressed, no worse after years of indulgence, than when we first gave the reins to it? Does that which we first allowed ourselves under the name of harmless levity on serious subjects, never proceed to profaneness? Does what was once admired as proper spirit, never grow into pride, never swell into insolence? Does the habit of incorrect narrative, or loose talking, or allowed hyperbole, never lead to falsehood, never settle in deceit? Before we positively determine that small faults are innocent, we must undertake to prove that they shall never outgrow their primitive dimensions; we must ascertain that the infant shall never become a giant.

Procrastination is reckoned among the most venial of our faults, and sits so lightly on our minds, that we scarcely apologize for it. But who can assure us, that had not the assistance we had resolved to give to one friend under distress, or the advice to another under temptation, to-day been delayed, and from mere sloth and indolence been put off till to-morrow, it might not have preserved the fortunes of the one, or saved the soul of the other?

It is not enough that we perform duties, we must perform them at the right time. We must do the duty of every day in its own season. Every day has its own imperious duties; we must not depend upon to-day for fulfilling those which we neglected yesterday, for to-day might not have been granted us. To-morrow will be equally peremptory in its demands; and the succeeding day, if we live to see it, will be ready with its proper claims.

Indecision, though it is not so often caused by reflection as by the want of it, yet may be as mischievous, for if we spend too much time in balancing probabilities, the period for action is lost. While we are ruminating on difficulties which may never occur, reconciling differences which perhaps do not exist, and poising in opposite scales things of nearly the same weight, the opportunity is lost of producing that good, which a firm and manly decision would have effected.

Idleness, though itself "the most unperforming of all the vices," is however the pass through which they all enter, the stage on which they all act. Though supremely passive itself, it lends a willing hand to all evil, practical as well as speculative. It is the abettor of every sin, whoever commits it, the receiver of all booty, whoever is the
thief. If it does nothing itself, it connives at all the mischief that is done by others.

Vanity is exceedingly misplaced when ranked, as she commonly is, in the catalogue of small faults. It is under her character of harmlessness that she does all her mischief. She is indeed often found in the society of great virtues. She does not follow in the train, but mixes herself with the company, and by mixing mars it. The use our spiritual enemy makes of her is a master stroke. When he cannot prevent us from doing right actions, he can accomplish his purpose almost as well "by making us vain of them." When he cannot deprive the public of our beneficence, he can defeat the effect to ourselves by poisoning the principle. When he cannot rob others of the good effect of the deed, he can gain his point by robbing the doer of his reward.

Peevishness is another of the minor miseries. Human life, though sufficiently unhappy, cannot contrive to furnish misfortunes so often as the passionate and the peevish can supply impatience. To commit our reason and temper to the mercy of every acquaintance, and of every servant, is not making the wisest use of them. If we recollect that violence and peevishness are the common resource of those whose knowledge is small, and whose arguments are weak, our very pride might lead us to subdue our passion, if we had not a better principle to resort to. Anger is the common refuge of insignificance. People who feel their character to be slight, hope to give it weight by inflation. But the blown bladder at its fullest distension is still empty. Sluggish characters, above all, have no right to be passionate. They should be contented with their own congenial faults. Dullness however has its impetuositie and its fluctuations as well as genius. It is on the coast of heavy Bœotia that the Euripus exhibits its unparalleled restlessness and agitation.

Trifling is ranked among the venial faults. But if time be one grand talent given us in order to our securing eternal life; if we trifle away that time so as to lose that eternal life, on which, by not trifling, we might have laid hold, then will it answer the end of sin. A life devoted to trifles not only takes away the inclination, but the capacity for higher pursuits. The truths of Christianity have scarcely more influence on a frivolous than on a profligate character. If the mind be so absorbed, not merely with what is vicious, but with what is useless, as to be thoroughly disin-
clined to the activities of a life of piety, it matters little what the cause is which so disinclines it. If these habits cannot be accused of great moral evil, yet it argues a low state of mind, that a being who has an eternity at stake, can abandon itself to trivial pursuits. If the great concern of life cannot be secured without habitual watchfulness, how is it to be secured by habitual carelessness? It will afford little comfort to the trifler, when at the last reckoning he gives in his long negative catalogue, that the more ostensible offender was worse employed. The trifler will not be weighed in the scale with the profligate, but in the balance of the sanctuary.

Some men make for themselves a sort of code of the lesser morals, of which they settle both the laws and the chronology. They fix "the climactericks of the mind*;" determine at what period such a vice may be adopted without discredit, at what age one bad habit may give way to another more in character. Having settled it as a matter of course, that to a certain age certain faults are natural, they proceed to act as if they thought them necessary.

But let us not practice on ourselves the gross imposition to believe that any failing, much less any vice, is necessarily appended to any state or any age, or that it is irresistible at any. We may accustom ourselves to talk of vanity and extravagance as belonging to the young, and avarice and peevishness to the old, till the next step will be that we shall think ourselves justified in adopting them. Whoever is eager to find excuses for vice and folly, will feel his own backwardness to practice them much diminished.

*C'est le premier pas qui coule. It is only to make out an imaginary necessity, and then we easily fall into the necessity we have imagined. Providence has established no such association. There is, it is true, more danger of certain faults under certain circumstances; and some temptations are stronger at some periods, but it is a proof that they are not irresistible because all do not fall into them. The evil is in ourselves, who mitigate the discredit by the supposed necessity. The prediction, like the dream of the astrologer, creates the event instead of foretelling it. But there is no supposition can be made of a bad case which will justify the making it our own: Nor will general positions ever serve for individual apologies.—Who has not

* Dr. Johnson.
known persons who, though they retain the sound health and vigor of active life, sink prematurely into sloth and inactivity, solely on the ground that these dispositions are fancied to be unavoidably incident to advancing years. They demand the indulgence before they feel the infirmity. Indolence thus forges a discharge from duty before the discharge is issued out by Providence. No.—Let us endeavor to meet the evils of the several conditions and periods of life with submission, but it is an offence to their divine dispenser to forestall them.

But we have still a saving clause for ourselves whether the evil be of a greater or lesser magnitude. If the fault be great, we lament the inability to resist it, if small, we deny the importance of so doing; we plead that we cannot withstand a great temptation, and that a small one is not worth withstanding. But if the temptation or the fault be great, we should resist it on account of that very magnitude; if small, the giving it up can cost but little; and the conscientious habit of conquering the less, will confer considerable strength towards subduing the greater.

There is again, a sort of splendid character, which, winding itself up occasionally to certain shining actions, thinks itself fully justified in breaking loose from the shackles of restraint in smaller things; it makes no scruple to indemnify itself for these popular deeds by indulgences which, though allowed, are far from innocent. It thus secures to itself praise and popularity by what is sure to gain it, and immunity from censure in indulging the favorite fault, practically exclaiming, "is it not a little one?"

Vanity is at the bottom of almost all, may we not say, of all our sins? We think more of signalizing than of saving ourselves. We overlook the hourly occasions which occur of serving, of obliging, of comforting those around us, while we sometimes, not unwillingly perform an act of notorious generosity. The habit however in the former case better indicates the disposition and bent of the mind, than the solitary act of splendor. The apostle does not say whatsoever great things ye do, but " whatsoever things ye do, do all to the glory of God." Actions are less weighed by their bulk than their motive. Virtues are less measured by their splendor than their principle. The racer proceeds in his course more effectually by a steady unslackened pace, than by starts of violent but unequal exertion.

That great abstract of moral law, of which we have
elsewhere spoken,* that rule of the highest court of appeal, set up in his own bosom, to which every man can always resort, "all things that ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also unto them."—This law if faithfully obeyed, operating as an infallible remedy, for all the disorders of self-love, would, by throwing its partiality into the right scale, establish the exercise of all the smaller virtues. Its strict observance would not only put a stop to all injustice, but to all unkindness; not only to oppressive acts, but to unfeeling language. Even haughty looks and supricilious gestures would be banished from the face of society, did we ask ourselves how we should like to receive what we are not ashamed to give.

Till we thus morally transmute place, person, and circumstance with those of our brother, we shall never treat him with the tenderness this gracious law enjoins. Small virtues and small offences are only so by comparison. To treat a fellow creature with harsh language, is not indeed a crime like robbing him of his estate or destroying his reputation. They are however all the offspring of the same family.—They are the same in quality though not in degree. All flow, though in streams of different magnitude, from the same fountain; all are indications of a departure from that principle which is included in the law of love. The consequences they involve are not less certain, though they are less important.

The reason why what are called religious people often differ so little from others in small trials is, that instead of bringing religion to their aid in their lesser vexations, they either leave the disturbance to prey upon their minds, or apply to false reliefs for its removal. Those who are rendered unhappy by frivolous troubles, seek comfort in frivolous enjoyments. But we should apply the same remedy to ordinary trials, as to great ones; for as small disquietudes spring from the same cause as great trials, namely, the uncertain and imperfect condition of human life, so they require the same remedy. Meeting common cares with a right spirit, would impart a smoothness to the temper, a spirit of cheerfulness to the heart, which would mightily break the force of heavier trials.

You apply to the power of religion in great evils.—Why does it not occur to you to apply to it in the less? Is it that you think the instrument greater than the occasion de-

* Chapter IX.
mands? It is not too great if the lesser one will not produce the effect; or if it produce it in the wrong way, for there is such a thing as putting an evil out of sight without curing it. You would apply to religion on the loss of your child—apply to it on the loss of your temper. Throw in this wholesome tree to sweeten the bitter waters. As no calamity is too great for the power of Christianity to mitigate, so none is too small to experience its beneficial results. Our behavior under the ordinary accidents of life forms a characteristic distinction between different classes of Christians. The least advanced resort to religion on great occasions, the deeper proficient resorts to it on all. What makes it appear of so little comparative value is, that the medicine prepared by the great Physician is thrown by instead of being taken. The patient thinks not of it but in extreme cases. A remedy, however potent, not applied, can produce no effect. But he who has adopted one fixed principle for the government of his life, will try to keep it in perpetual exercise. An acquaintance with the nature of human evils and of their remedy, would check that spirit of complaint which so much abounds, and which often makes so little difference between people professing religion and those who profess it not.

If the duties in question are not great, they become important by the constant demand that is made for them. They have been called "the small coin of human life," and on their perpetual and unobstructed circulation depends much of the comfort, as well as convenience of its transactions. They make up in frequency what they want in magnitude. How few of us are called to carry the doctrines of Christianity into distant lands! but which of us is not called every day to adorn those doctrines, by gentleness in our own carriage, by kindness and forbearance to all about us?

In performing the unostensible duties, there is no incentive from vanity. No love of fame inspires that virtue, of which fame will never hear. There can be but one motive, and that the purest, for the exercise of virtues, the report of which will never reach beyond the little circle whose happiness they promote. They do not fill the world with our renown, but they fill our own family with comfort, and if they have the love of God for their principle, they will have his favor for their reward.

In this enumeration of faults, we include not sins of infirmity, inadvertency and surprise, to which even the most
sincere Christians are but too liable. What are here adverted to, are allowed, habitual, and unresisted faults: habitual, because unresisted, and allowed from the notion that they are too inconsiderable to call for resistance. Faults into which we are betrayed through surprise and inadvertency, though that is no reason for committing them, may not be without their uses: they renew the salutary conviction of our sinful nature, make us little in our own eyes, increase our sense of dependence, promote watchfulness, deepen humility and quicken repentance.

We must however be careful not to entangle the conscience or embarrass the spirit by groundless apprehensions. We have a merciful father, not a hard master to deal with. We must not harass our minds with a suspicious dread, as if by a needless rigor the Almighty were laying snares to entrap us, nor be terrified with imaginary fears, as if he were on the watch to punish every casual error.—To be immutable and impeccable belongs not to humanity. He, who made us, best knows of what we are made. Our compassionate High Priest will bear with much infirmity, will pardon much involuntary weakness.

But knowing, as every man must know who looks into his own heart, the difficulties he has from the intervention of his evil tempers, in serving God faithfully, and still however earnestly desirous of serving him, is it not to be lamented that he is not more solicitous to remove his hindrances by trying to avoid those inferior sins, and resisting those lesser temptations, and practising those smaller virtues, the neglect of which obstructs his way, and keeps him back in the performance of higher duties. Instead of little renunciations being grievous, and petty self-denials a hardship, they in reality soften grievances, diminish hardship. They are the private drill which trains for public service.

If, as we have repeatedly observed, the principle is the test of the action, we are hourly furnished with occasions of showing our piety by the spirit in which the quiet unobserved actions of life are performed. The sacrifices may be too little to be observed, except by him to whom they are offered. But small solicitudes, and demonstrations of attachment, scarcely perceptible to any eye but his for whom they are made, bear the true character of love to God, as they are the infallible marks of affection to our fellow creatures.

By enjoining small duties, the spirit of which is every
where implied in the Gospel, God, as it were, seems contriving to render the great ones easy to us. He makes the light yoke of Christ still lighter, not by abridging duty, but by increasing its facility through its familiarity. These little habits at once indicate the sentiment of the soul and improve it.

It is an awful consideration, and one which every Christian should bring home to his own bosom, whether small faults wilfully persisted in, may not in time not only dim the light of conscience, but extinguish the spirit of grace: whether the power of resistance against great sins may not be finally withdrawn as a just punishment for having neglected to exert it against small ones.

Let us endeavor to maintain in our minds the awful impression, that perhaps among the first objects which may meet our eyes when we open them on the eternal world, may be that tremendous book, in which, together with our great and actual sins, may be recorded in no less prominent characters, the ample page of omissions, of neglected opportunities, and even of fruitless good intentions, of which indolence, indecision, thoughtlessness, vanity, trifling and procrastination, concurred to frustrate the execution.

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CHAP. XII.

Self-Examination.

In this age of general inquiry, every kind of ignorance is esteemed dishonorable. In almost every sort of knowledge there is a competition for superiority. Intellectual attainments are never to be undervalued. Learning is the best human thing. All knowledge is excellent as far as it goes, and as long as it lasts. But how short is the period before “tongues shall cease, and knowledge shall vanish away!”

Shall we then esteem it dishonorable to be ignorant in any thing which relates to life and literature, to taste and science, and not feel ashamed to live in ignorance of our own hearts?

To have a flourishing estate and a mind in disorder; to keep exact accounts with a steward, and no reckoning
with our Maker; to have an accurate knowledge of loss or gain in our business, and to remain utterly ignorant whether our spiritual concerns are improving or declining; to be cautious in ascertaining at the end of every year how much we have increased or diminished our fortune, and to be careless whether we have incurred profit or loss in faith and holiness, is a wretched miscalculation of the comparative value of things. To bestow our attention on objects in an inverse proportion to their importance, is surely no proof that our learning has improved our judgment.

That deep thinker and acute reasoner, Dr. Barrow, has remarked that "it is a peculiar excellency of human nature, and which distinguishes man from the inferior creatures more than bare reason itself, that he can reflect upon all that is done within him, can discern the tendencies of his soul, and is acquainted with his own purposes."

This distinguishing faculty of self-inspection would not have been conferred on man, if it had not been intended that it should be in habitual operation. It is surely, as we before observed, as much a common law of prudence, to look well to our spiritual as to our worldly possessions. We have appetites to control, imaginations to restrain, tempers to regulate, passions to subdue, and how can this internal work be effected, how can our thoughts be kept within due bounds, how can a proper bias be given to the affections, how can "the little state of man" be preserved from continual insurrection, how can this restraining power be maintained, if this capacity of discerning, if this faculty of inspecting be not kept in regular exercise? Without constant discipline, imagination will become an outlaw, conscience an attainted rebel.

This inward eye, this power of introversion, is given us for a continual watch upon the soul. On an unremitted vigilance over its interior motions, those fruitful seeds of action, those prolific principles of vice and virtue, will depend both the formation and the growth of our moral and religious character. A superficial glance is not enough for a thing so deep, an unsteady view will not suffice for a thing so wavering, nor a casual look for a thing so deceitful as the human heart. A partial inspection on any one side, will not be enough for an object which must be observed under a variety of aspects, because it is always shifting its position, always changing its appearances.

We should examine not only our conduct but our opinions; not only our faults but our prejudices, not only our
propensities but our judgments. Our actions themselves will be obvious enough; it is our intentions which require the scrutiny. These we should follow up to their remotest springs, scrutinize to their deepest recesses, trace through their most perplexing windings. And lest we should, in our pursuit, wander in uncertainty and blindness, let us make use of that guiding clue which the Almighty has furnished by his word, and by his spirit, for conducting us through the intricacies of this labyrinth. “What I know not teach Thou me,” should be our constant petition in all our researches.

Did we turn our thoughts inward, it would abate much of the self-complacency with which we swallow the flat-tery of others. Flattery hurts not him who flatters not himself: If we examined our motives keenly, we should frequently blush at the praises our actions receive. Let us then conscientiously inquire not only what we do, but whence and why we do it, from what motive and to what end.

Self-inspection is the only means to preserve us from self-conceit. We could not surely so very extravagantly value a being whom we ourselves should not only see, but feel to be so full of faults. Self-acquaintance will give us a far more deep and intimate knowledge of our own errors than we can possibly have, with all the inquisitiveness of an idle curiosity, of the errors of others. We are eager enough to blame them without knowing their motives. We are no less eager to vindicate ourselves, though we cannot be entirely ignorant of our own. Thus two virtues will be acquired by the same act, humility, and candor; an impartial review of our own infirmities, being the likeliest way to make us tender and compassionate to those of others.

Nor shall we be liable so to overrate our own judgment, when we perceive that it often forms such false estimates, is so captivated with trifles, so elated with petty successes, so dejected with little disappointments. When we hear others commend our charity which we know is so cold; when others extol our piety which we feel to be so dead; when they applaud the energies of our faith, which we must know to be so faint and feeble; we cannot possibly be so intoxicated with the applause which never would have been given had the applauder known us as we know, or ought to know, ourselves. If we contradict him, it may be only to draw on ourselves the imputation of a fresh virtue, humility which perhaps we as little deserve to have
ascribed to us as that which we have been renouncing. If we kept a sharp look out, we should not be proud of praises which cannot apply to us, but should rather grieve at the involuntary fraud of imposing on others, by tacitly accept- ing a character to which we have so little real pretension. To be delighted at finding that people think so much better of us than we are conscious of deserving, is in effect to rejoice in the success of our own deceit.

We shall also become more patient, more forbearing and forgiving, shall better endure the harsh judgment of others respecting us, when we perceive that their opinion of us nearly coincides with our own real though unacknowledged sentiments. There is much less injury incurred by others thinking too ill of us, than in our thinking too well of ourselves.

It is evident, then, that to live at random, is not the life of a rational, much less of an immortal, least of all of an accountable being. To pray occasionally, without a deliberate course of prayer; to be generous without proportioning our means to our expenditure; to be liberal without a plan, and charitable without a principle; to let the mind float on the current of public opinion, lie at the mercy of events, for the probable occurrence of which we have made no provision; to be every hour liable to death without any habitual preparation for it; to carry within us a principle which we believe will exist through all the countless ages of eternity, and yet to make little inquiry whether that eternity is likely to be happy or miserable—all this is an inconsiderateness, which, if adopted in the ordinary concerns of life, would bid fair to ruin a man’s reputation for common sense; yet of this infatuation he who lives without self-examination is absolutely guilty.

Nothing more plainly shows us what weak, vascillating creatures we are, than the difficulty we find in fixing ourselves down to the very self-scrutiny we had deliberately resolved on. Like the worthless Roman emperor we retire to our closet, under the appearance of serious occupation, but might now and then be surprised, if not in catching flies, yet in pursuits nearly as contemptible. Some trifle which we should be ashamed to dwell upon at any time, intrudes itself on the moments dedicated to serious thought; recollection is interrupted; the whole chain of reflection broken, so that the scattered links cannot again be united. And so inconsistent are we that we are sometimes not sorry to have a plausible pretence for interrupting the very em-
ployment in which we had just before made it a duty to engage. For want of this home acquaintance, we remain in utter ignorance of our inability to meet even the ordinary trials of life with cheerfulness; indeed by this neglect we confirm that inability. Nursed in the lap of luxury, we have an indefinite notion that we have but a loose hold on the things of this world, and of the world itself. But let some accident take away, not the world, but some trifle on which we thought we set no value while we possessed it, and we find to our astonishment that we hold, not the world only, but even this trivial possession, with a pretty tight grasp. Such detections of our self-ignorance, if they do not serve to wean, ought at least to humble us.

There is a spurious sort of self-examination which does not serve to enlighten, but to blind. A person who has left off some notorious vice, who has softened some shades of a glaring sin, or substituted some outward forms in the place of open irreligion, looks on his change of character with pleasure. He compares himself with what he was, and views the alteration with self-complacency. He deceives himself by taking his standard from his former conduct, or from the character of still worse men, instead of taking it from the unerring rule of scripture. He looks rather at the discredit than the sinfulness of his former life, and being more ashamed of what is disreputable than grieved at what is vicious, he is, in this state of shallow reformation, more in danger in proportion as he is more in credit. He is not aware that it is not having a fault or two less that will carry him to heaven, while his heart is still glued to the world and estranged from God.

If we ever look into our hearts at all, we are naturally most inclined to it when we think we have been acting right. Here inspection gratifies self-love. We have no great difficulty in directing our attention to an object, when that object presents us with pleasing images. But it is a painful effort to compel the mind to turn in on itself, when the view only presents subjects for regret and remorse. This painful duty however must be performed, and will be more salutary in proportion as it is less pleasant. Let us establish it into a habit to ruminate on our faults. With the recollection of our virtues we need not feed our vanity. They will, if that vanity does not obliterate them, be recorded elsewhere.

We are also most disposed to look at those parts of our character which will best bear it, and which consequently
least need it: at those parts which afford most self-gratulation. If a covetous man, for instance, examines himself, instead of turning his attention to the peccant part, he applies the probe where he knows it will not go very deep; he turns from his avarice to that sobriety of which his very avarice is perhaps the source. Another, who is the slave of passion, fondly rests upon some act of generosity, which he considers as a fair commutation for some favorite vice, that would cost him more to renounce than he is willing to part with. We are all too much disposed to dwell on that smiling side of the prospect which pleases and deceives us, and to shut our eyes upon that part which we do not choose to see, because we are resolved not to quit. Self-love always holds a screen between the superficial self-examiner and his faults. The nominal Christian wraps himself up in forms which he makes himself believe are religion. He exults in what he does, overlooks what he ought to do, nor ever suspects that what is done at all can be done amiss.

As we are so indolent that we seldom examine a truth on more than one side, so we generally take care that it shall be that side which shall confirm some old prejudices. While we will not take pains to correct those prejudices, and to rectify our judgment, lest it should oblige us to discard a favorite opinion, we are yet as eager to judge, and as forward to decide, as if we were fully possessed of the grounds on which a sound judgment may be made, and a just decision formed.

We should watch ourselves, whether we observe a simple rule of truth and justice, as well in our conversation, as in our ordinary transactions; whether we are exact in our measures of commendation and censure; whether we do not bestow extravagant praise where simple approbation alone is due; whether we do not withhold commendation, where, if given, it would support modesty and encourage merit; whether what deserves only a slight censure, as imprudent, we do not reprove as immoral; whether we do not sometimes affect to overrate ordinary merit, in the hope of securing to ourselves the reputation of candor, that we may on other occasions, with less suspicion, depreciate established excellence. We extol the first, because we fancy that it can come into no competition with us, and we derogate from the last, because it obviously eclipses us.

Let us ask ourselves if we are conscientiously upright in our estimation of benefits; whether, when we have a
favor to ask we do not depreciate its value, when we have one to grant, we do not aggravate it.

It is only by scrutinizing the heart that we can know it. It is only by knowing the heart that we can reform the life. Any careless observer indeed, when his watch goes wrong, may see that it does so by casting an eye on the dial plate; but it is only the artist who takes it to pieces, and examines every spring and every wheel separately, and who, by ascertaining the precise causes of the irregularity, can set the machine right, and restore the obstructed movements.

The illusions of intellectual vision would be materially corrected, by a close habit of cultivating an acquaintance with our hearts. We fill much too large a space in our own imaginations; we fancy we take up more room in the world than Providence assigns to an individual who has to divide his allotment with so many millions, who are all of equal importance in their own eyes; and who, like us, are elbowing others to make room for themselves. Just as in the natural world, where every particle of matter would stretch itself, and move out of its place, if it were not kept in order by surrounding particles; the pressure of other parts reduces this to remain in a confinement from which it would escape, if it were not thus pressed and acted upon on all sides. The conscientious practice we have been recommending, would greatly assist in reducing us to our proper dimensions, and in limiting us to our proper place. We should be astonished, if we could see our real diminutiveness, and the speck we actually occupy. When shall we learn from our own feelings, of how much consequence every man is to himself?

Nor must the examination be occasional, but regular. Let us not run into long arrears, but settle our accounts frequently. Little articles will run up to a large amount, if they are not cleared off. Even our innocent days, as we may choose to call them, will not have passed without furnishing their contingent. Our deadness in devotion—our eagerness for human applause—our care to conceal our faults rather than to correct them—our negligent performance of some relative duty—our imprudence in conversation, especially at table—our inconsideration—our driving to the very edge of permitted indulgences—let us keep these—let us keep all our numerous items in small sums. Let us examine them while the particulars are fresh in our memory, otherwise, however we may flatter ourselves that lesser evils will be swallowed up by the
greater, we may find when we come to settle the grand account, that they will not be the less remembered for not having been recorded.

And let it be one subject of our frequent inquiry, whether since we last scrutinized our hearts, our secular affairs, or our eternal concerns have had the predominance there. We do not mean which of them has occupied most of our time, the larger portion of which must, necessarily, to the generality, be absorbed in the cares of the present life; but on which our affections have been most bent; and especially how we have conducted ourselves when there has arisen a competition between the interests of both.

That general burst of sins which so frequently rushes in on the consciences of the dying, would be much moderated by previous habitual self-examination. It will not do to repent in the lump. The sorrow must be as circumstantial as the sin. Indefinite repentance is no repentance. And it is one grand use of self-inquiry, to remind us that all unforsaken sins are unrepented sins.

To a Christian there is this substantial comfort attending a minute self-inspection, that when he finds fewer sins to be noted, and more victories over temptation obtained, he has a solid evidence of his advancement, which well repays his trouble.

The faithful searcher into his own heart, that "chamber of imagery," feels himself in the situation of the prophet*, who being conducted in vision from one idol to another, the spirit, at sight of each, repeatedly exclaims, "here is another abomination!" The prophet being commanded to dig deeper, the further he penetrated the more evils he found, while the spirit continued to cry out, "I will show thee yet more abominations."

Self-examination by detecting self-love, self-denial by weakening its power, self-government by reducing its despotism, turns the temper of the soul from its natural bias, controls the disorderly appetite, and, under the influence of divine grace, in a good measure restores to the man that dominion over himself, which God at first gave him over the inferior creatures. Desires, passions, and appetites, are brought to move somewhat more in their appointed order, subjects not tyrants. What the Stoics vainly pretended to, Christianity effects. It restores man to a dominion over his own will, and in a good measure

* Ezekiel.
enthrones him in that empire which he had forfeited by sin.

He now begins to survey his interior, the awful world within; not indeed with self-complacency, but with the control of a sovereign; he still finds too much rebellion to indulge security, he therefore continues his inspection with vigilance, but without perturbation. He continues to experience a remainder of insubordination and disorder, but this rather solicits to a stricter government than drives him to relax his discipline.

This self-inspection somewhat resembles the correction of a literary performance. After many and careful revivals, though some grosser faults may be done away; though the errors are neither quite so numerous, nor so glaring as at first, yet the critic perpetually perceives faults which he had not perceived before; negligences appear which he had overlooked, and even defects start up which had passed on him for beauties. He finds much to amend, and even to expunge, in what he had before admired. When by rigorous castigation the most acknowledged faults are corrected, his critical acumen improved by exercise, and a more habitual acquaintance with his subject, still detects and will for ever detect, new imperfections. But he neither throws aside his work, nor remits his criticism, which if it do not make the work perfect, will at least make the author humble. Conscious that if it is not quite so bad as it was, it is still at an immeasurable distance from the required excellence.

Is it not astonishing that we should go on repeating periodically, "Try me, O God," while we are yet neglecting to try ourselves? Is there not something more like deficiency than devotion, to invite the inspection of Omniscience to that heart which we ourselves neglect to inspect? How can a Christian solemnly cry out to the Almighty, "seek the ground of my heart, prove me and examine my thoughts, and see if there be any ways of wickedness in me," while he himself neglects to "examine his heart," is afraid of "proving his thoughts," and dreads to inquire if there "be any way of wickedness" in himself, knowing that the inquiry ought to lead to the expulsion.

In our self-inquisition let us fortify our virtue by a rigorous exactness in calling things by their proper names. Self-love is particularly ingenious in inventing disguises of this kind. Let us lay them open, strip them bare, face them, and give them as little quarter as if they were the
faults of another. Let us not call wounded pride, delicacy
Self-love is made up of soft and sickly sensibilities. Not
that sensibility which melts at the sorrows of others, but
that which cannot endure the least suffering itself. It is
alive in every pore where self is concerned. A touch is
a wound. It is careless in inflicting pain, but exquisitely
awake in feeling it. It defends itself before it is attacked,
revenge affronts before they are offered, and resents as an
insult the very suspicion of an imperfection.

In order then to unmask our hearts, let us not be
contented to examine our vices, let us examine our virtues
also, "those smaller faults." Let us scrutinize to the bot-
tom those qualities and actions which have more particu-
larly obtained public estimation. Let us inquire if they
were genuine in the principle, simple in the intention, hon-
est in the prosecution. Let us ask ourselves if in some
admired instances our generosity had no tincture of vanity,
our charity no taint of ostentation? Whether, when we
did such a right action which brought us credit, we should
have persisted in doing it, had we foreseen that it would
incur censure? Do we never deceive ourselves by mista-
kling a constitutional indifference of temper for Christian
moderation? Do we never construe our love of ease into
deadness of the world? Our animal activity into Christian
zeal? Do we never mistake our obstinacy for firmness, our
pride for fortitude, our selfishness for feeling, our love of
controversy for the love of God, our indolence of temper
for superiority to human applause? When we have strip-
ped our good qualities bare; when we have made all due
deductions for natural temper, easiness of disposition, self-
interest, desire of admiration, of every extrinsic appendage,
every illegitimate motive, let us fairly cast up the account,
and we shall be mortified to see how little there will remain.

Pride may impose itself upon us even in the shape of re-
pentance. The humble Christian is grieved at his faults,
the proud man is angry at them. He is indignant when he
discovers he has done wrong, not so much because his sin
offends God, as because it has let him see that he is not
quite so good as he had tried to make himself believe.

It is more necessary to excite us to the humbling of our
pride than to the performance of certain good actions; the
former is more difficult as it is less pleasant. That very
pride will of itself stimulate to the performance of many
things that are laudable. These performances will repro-
duce pride as they were produced by it: whereas humility
has no outward stimulus. Divine grace alone produces it. It is so far from being actuated by the love of fame, that it is not humility, till it has laid the desire of fame in the dust.

If an actual virtue consists, as we have frequently had occasion to observe, in the dominion over the contrary vice, humility is the conquest over pride, charity over selfishness, not only a victory over the natural temper, but a substitution of the opposite quality. This proves that all virtue is founded in self-denial, self-denial in self-knowledge, and self-knowledge in self-examination. Pride so insinuates itself in all we do, and say, and think, that our apparent humility has not seldom its origin in pride. That very impatience which we feel at the perception of our faults is produced by the astonishment at finding that we are not perfect. This sense of our sins should make us humble but not desperate. It should teach us to distrust every thing in ourselves, and to hope for every thing from God. The more we lay open the wounds which sin has made, the more earnestly shall we seek the remedy which Christianity has provided.

But instead of seeking for self-knowledge, we are glancing about us for grounds of self-exaltation. We almost resemble the Pharisee, who with so much self-complacency, delivered in the catalogue of his own virtues and other men's sins, and, like the Tartars, who think they possess the qualities of those they murder, fancied that the sins of which he accused the Publican would swell the amount of his own good deeds. Like him we take a few items from memory, and a few more from imagination. Instead of pulling down the edifice which pride has raised, we are looking round on our good works for buttresses to prop it up. We excuse ourselves from the imputation of many faults by alleging that they are common, and by no means peculiar to ourselves. This is one of the weakest of our deceits. Faults are not less personally ours because others commit them. There is divisibility in sin as well as in matter. Is it any diminution of our error that others are guilty of the same?

Self-love being a very industrious principle, has generally two concerns in hand at the same time. It is as busy in concealing our own defects as in detecting those of others, especially those of the wise and good. We might indeed direct its activity in the latter instance to our own advantage, for if the faults of good men are injurious to
themselves, they might be rendered profitable to us, if we were careful to convert them to their true use. But instead of turning them into a means of promoting our own watchfulness, we employ them mischievously in two ways. We lessen our respect for pious characters when we see the infirmities which are blended with their fine qualities, and we turn their failings into a justification of our own, which are not like theirs overshadowed with virtues. To admire the excellences of others without imitating them is fruitless admiration, to condemn their errors without avoiding them is unprofitable censoriousness.

When we are compelled by our conscience, to acknowledge and regret any fault we have recently committed, this fault so presses upon our recollection, that we seem to forget that we have any other. This single error fills our mind, and we look at it as through a telescope, which, while it shows an object, confines the sight to that one object exclusively. Others indeed are more effectually shut out, than if we were not examining this. Thus while the object in question is magnified, the others are as if they did not exist.

It seems to be established into a kind of system, not to profit by any thing without us, and not to cultivate an acquaintance with any thing within us. Though we are perpetually remarking on the defects of others, yet when does the remark lead us to study and to root out the same defects in our own hearts? We are almost every day hearing of the death of others, but does it induce us to reflect on death as a thing in which we have an individual concern? We consider the death of a friend as a loss, but seldom apply it as a warning. The death of others we lament, the faults of others we censure, but how seldom do we make use of the one for our own amendment, or of the other for our own preparation!*

It is the fashion of the times to try experiments in the arts, in agriculture, in philosophy. In every science, the diligent professor is always afraid there may be some secret which he has not yet attained; some occult principle which would reward the labor of discovery; something even which the assiduous and intelligent have actually found out, but which has hitherto eluded his pursuit. And shall the Christian stop short in his scrutiny, shall he not examine and inquire till he lays hold on the very heart and core of religion?

* For this hint, and a few others on the same subject, the Author is indebted to that excellent Christian Moralist, M. Nicole.
Why should experimental philosophy be the prevailing study, and experimental religion be branded as the badge of enthusiasm, the cant of a hollow profession? Shall we never labor to establish the distinction between appearance and reality, between studying religion critically and embracing it practically? between having our conduct creditable and our heart sanctified? Shall we not aspire to do the best things from the highest motives, and elevate our aims with our attainments? Why should we remain in the vestibule when the sanctuary is open? Why should we be contented to dwell in the outer courts, when we are invited to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus?

Natural reason is not likely to furnish arguments sufficiently cogent, nor motives sufficiently powerful, to drive us to a close self-inspection. Our corruptions foster this ignorance. To this they owe their undisputed possession of our hearts. No principle short of Christianity is strong enough to impel us to a study so disagreeable as that of our faults. Of Christianity, humility is the prime grace, and this grace can never take root and flourish in a heart that lives in ignorance of itself. If we do not know the greatness and extent of our sins, if we do not know the imperfection of our virtues, the fallibility of our best resolutions, the infirmity of our purest purposes, we cannot be humble; if we are not humble, we cannot be Christians.

But it may be asked, is there to be no end to this vigilance? Is there no assigned period when this self-denial may become unnecessary? No given point when we may be emancipated from this vexatious self-inspection? Is the matured Christian to be a slave to the same drudgery as the novice? The true answer is—we may cease to watch, when our spiritual enemy ceases to assail. We may be off our guard, when there is no longer any temptation without. We may cease our self-denial, when there is no more corruption within. We may give the reins to our imagination, when we are sure its tendencies will be towards heaven. We may dismiss repentance, when sin is abolished. We may indulge selfishness, when we can do it without danger to our souls. We may neglect prayer, when we no longer need the favor of God. We may cease to praise him, when he ceases to be gracious to us. To discontinue our vigilance at any period short of this, will be to defeat all the virtues we have practised on earth, to put to hazard all our hopes of happiness in heaven.
"The idol self," says an excellent old divine, * has made more desolation among men than ever was made in those places where idols were served by human sacrifices. It has preyed more fiercely on human lives, than Moloch, or the Minotaur."

To worship images is a more obvious, but it is scarcely a more degrading idolatry, than to set up self in opposition to God. To devote ourselves to this service is as perfect slavery as the service of God is perfect freedom. If we cannot imitate the sacrifice of Christ in his death, we are called upon to imitate the sacrifice of himself in his will. Even the Son of God declared, "I came not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me." This was his grand lesson, this was his distinguishing character.

Self-will is the ever flowing fountain of all the evil tempers which deform our hearts, of all the boiling passions which inflame and disorder society; the root of bitterness on which all its corrupt fruits grow. We set up our own understanding against the wisdom of God, and our own passions against the will of God. If we could ascertain the precise period when sensuality ceased to govern in the animal part of our nature, and pride in the intellectual, that period would form the most memorable æra of the Christian life; from that moment he begins a new date of liberty and happiness; from that stage he sets out on a new career of peace, liberty, and virtue.

Self-love is a Proteus of all shapes, shades, and complexions. It has the power of dilatation and contraction, as best serves the occasion. There is no crevice so small through which its subtle essence cannot force its way, no space so ample that it cannot stretch itself to fill. It is of all degrees of refinement; so coarse and hungry as to gorge itself with the grossest adulation, so fastidious as to require a homage as refined as itself; so artful as to elude the detection of ordinary observers, so specious as to escape the observation of the very heart in which it reigns paramount: yet, though so extravagant in its appetites, it can adopt a

* Howe.
moderation which imposes, a delicacy which veils its deformity, an artificial character which keeps its real one out of sight.

We are apt to speak of self-love as if it were only a symptom, whereas it is the distemper itself; a malignant distemper which has possession of the moral constitution, of which malady every part of the system participates. In direct opposition to the effect produced by the touch of the fabled king, which converted the basest materials into gold, this corrupting principle pollutes, by coming in contact with it, whatever is in itself great and noble.

Self-love is the centre of the unrenewed heart. This stirring principle, as has been observed, serves indeed the virtuous mind to wake; but it disturbs it from its slumber to ends and purposes directly opposite to those assigned to it by our incomparable bard. * Self-love is by no means "the small pebble which stirs the peaceful lake." It is rather the pent-up wind within, which causes the earthquake; it is the tempest which agitates the sleeping ocean. Had the image been as just as its clothing is beautiful; or, rather, had Mr. Pope been as sound a theologian as he was an exquisite poet, the allusion in his hands might have conveyed a sounder meaning, without losing a particle of its elegance. This might have been effected, by only substituting the effect for the cause; that is, by making benevolence the principle instead of the consequence, and by discarding self-love from its central situation in the construction of the metaphor.

But by arraying a beggarly idea in princely robes, he knew that his own splendid powers could at any time transform meanness into majesty, and deformity into beauty.

After all, however, le vrai est le seul beau. Had he not blindly adopted the misleading system of the noble sceptic, "his guide, philosopher and friend," he might have transferred the shining attributes of the base-born thing which he has dressed out with so many graces, to the legitimate claimant, benevolence; of which self-love is so far from being, as he represents, the moving spring, that they are both working in a course of incessant counteraction, the spirit striving against the flesh, and the flesh against the spirit.

To Christian benevolence all the happy effects attributed

* Essay on Man, 1. 362.
to self-love might have been fairly traced. It was only to
dislodge the idol, and make the love of God the centre,
and the poet’s delightful numbers might have conveyed
truths worthy of so perfect a vehicle. "This centre
moved," does indeed extend its pervading influence in the
very manner ascribed to the opposite principle; does in-
deed spread from its throne in the individual breast, to all
those successive circles, "wide and more wide," of which
the poet makes self-love the first mover. *

The apostle James appears to have been of a different
opinion from the ethic bard; he speaks as if he suspected
that the pebble stirred the lake a little too roughly. He
traces this mischievous principle, from its birth to the
largest extent of its malign influence. The question,
"whence come wars and fightings among you?" he an-
swers by another question—"come they not hence, even
of your lusts that war in your members?"

The same pervading spirit which creates hostility be-
tween nations, creates animosity among neighbors, and
discord in families. It is the same principle which, having
in the beginning made "Cain the first male child," a mur-
derer in his father’s house, has been ever since in perpetu-
al operation; has been transmitted in one unbroken line of
succession, through that long chain of crimes of which
history is composed, to the present triumphant spoiler of
Europe.—In cultivated societies, laws repress, by punish-
ing, the overt act in private individuals, but no one thing
but the Christian religion has ever been devised to cleanse
the spring.

"The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately
wicked, who can know it?" This proposition, this interro-
gation, we read with complacency, and both the aphorism
and the question being a portion of scripture, we think it
would not be decent to controvert it. We read it however

* Self-love thus pushed to social, to divine,
Gives thee to make thy neighbor’s blessing thine.
Self-love but serves the virtuous mind to make
As the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake;
The centre moved, a circle strait succeeds,
Another still, and still another spreads;
Friend, parent, neighbor, first it will embrace,
His country next, and next all human race.

The Author hopes to be forgiven for these remarks: she has hazarded them
for the sake of her more youthful readers.—She has not forgotten the time
when, in the admiration of youthful enthusiasm, she never suspected that the
principle of these finished verses was less excellent than the poetry.
with a secret reservation, that it is only the heart of all the rest of the world that is meant, and we rarely make the application which the Scripture intended. Each hopes that there is one heart which may escape the charge, and he makes the single exception in favor of his own. But if the exception which every one makes were true, there would not be a deceitful or wicked heart in the world.

As a theory we are ready enough to admire self-knowledge, yet when the practice comes in question, we are as blindfold as if our happiness depended on our ignorance. To lay hold on a religious truth, and to maintain our hold, is no easy matter. Our understandings are not more ready to receive than our affections to lose it. We like to have an intellectual knowledge of divine things, but to cultivate a spiritual acquaintance with them cannot be effected at so cheap a rate. We can even more readily force ourselves to believe that which has no affinity with our understanding, than we can bring ourselves to choose that which has no interest in our will, no correspondence with our passions. One of the first duties of a Christian is to endeavor to conquer this antipathy to the self-denying doctrines against which the human heart so sturdily holds out. The learned take incredible pains for the acquisition of knowledge. The philosopher cheerfully consumes the midnight oil in his laborious pursuits; he willingly sacrifices food and rest to conquer a difficulty in science. Here the labor is pleasant, the fatigue is grateful, the very difficulty is not without its charms. Why do we feel so differently in our religious pursuits? Because in the most operose human studies, there is no contradiction of self, there is no opposition to the will, there is no combat of the affections. If the passions are at all implicated, if self-love is at all concerned, it is rather in the way of gratification than of opposition.

There is such a thing as a mechanical Christianity. There are good imitations of religion, so well executed and so resembling as not only to deceive the spectator but the artist. Self-love in its various artifices to deceive us to our ruin, sometimes makes use of a means, which if properly used, is one of the most beneficial that can be devised to preserve us from its influence, the perusal of pious books.

But these very books in the hands of the ignorant, the indolent, and the self-satisfied, produce an effect directly contrary to that which they were intended to produce and
which they actually do produce on minds prepared for the perusal. They inflate where they were intended to humble. As some hypocondriacs, who amuse their melancholy hours with consulting indiscriminately every medical book which falls in their way, fancy they find their own case in every page, their own ailment in the ailment of every patient, till they believe they actually feel every pain of which they read, though the work, treats of cases diametrically opposite to their own—so the religious valetudinarian, as unreasonably elated as the others are depressed, reads books descriptive of a highly religious state, with the same unhappy self application. He feels his spiritual pulse by a watch, that has no movements in common with it, yet he fancies that they go exactly alike. He dwells with delight on symptoms, not one of which belongs to him, and flatters himself with their supposed agreement. He observes in those books what are the signs of grace, and he observes them with complete self application; he traces what are the evidences of being in God’s favor, and those evidences he finds in himself.

Self-ignorance appropriates truths faithfully stated but wholly inapplicable. The presumption of the novice arrogates to itself the experience of the advanced Christian. He is persuaded that it is his own case, and seizes on the consolations which belong only to the most elevated piety. Self-knowledge would correct the judgment. It would teach us to use the pattern held out as an original to copy, instead of leading us to fancy that we are already wrought into the assimilation. It would teach us when we read the history of an established Christian, to labor after a conformity to it, instead of mistaking it for the delineation of our own character.

Human prudence, daily experience, self-love, all teach us to distrust others, but all motives combined do not teach us to distrust ourselves; we confide unreservedly in our own heart, though as a guide it misleads, as a counsellor it betrays. It is both party and judge. As the one, it blinds through ignorance, as the other, it acquits through partiality.

Though we value ourselves upon our discretion in not confiding too implicitly in others, yet it would be difficult to find any friend, any neighbor, or even any enemy who has deceived us so often as we have deceived ourselves. If an acquaintance betray us, we take warning, are on the watch, and are careful not to trust him again. But how-
ever frequently the bosom traitor deceive and mislead, no such determined stand is made against his treachery: We lie as open to his next assault as if he had never betrayed us. We do not profit by the remembrance of the past delusion to guard against the future.

Yet if another deceive us, it is only in matters respecting this world, but we deceive ourselves in things of eternal moment. The treachery of others can only affect our fortune or our fame, or at worst our peace; but the internal traitor may mislead us to our everlasting destruction. We are too much disposed to suspect others who probably have neither the inclination nor the power to injure us, but we seldom suspect our own heart though it possesses and employs both. We ought however fairly to distinguish between the simple vanity and the hypocrisy of self-love. Those who content themselves with talking as if the praise of virtue implied the practice, and who expect to be thought good, because they commend goodness, only propagate the deceit which has misled themselves, whereas hypocrisy does not even believe herself. She has deeper motives, she has designs to answer, competitions to promote, projects to effect. But mere vanity can subsist on the thin air of the admiration she solicits, without intending to get any thing by it. She is gratuitous in her loquacity; for she is ready to display her own merit to those who have nothing to give in return, whose applause brings no profit, and whose censure no disgrace.

It is not strange that we should judge of things not according to truth, but according to the opinion of others in cases foreign to ourselves, cases on which we have no correct means of determining; but we do it in things which relate immediately to ourselves, thus making not truth but the opinion of others our standard in points which others cannot know, and of which we ought not to be ignorant. We are as fond of the applauses even of the upper gallery as the dramatic poet. Like him we affect to despise the mob considered as individual judges, yet as a mass, we covet their applause. Like him we feel strengthened by the number of voices in our favor, and are less anxious about the goodness of the work, than the loudness of the acclamation. Success is merit in the eye of both.

But even though we may put more refinement into our self-love, it is self-love still. No subtlety of reasoning, no elegance of taste, though it may disguise the radical principle, can destroy it. We are still too much in love with
flattery, even though we may profess to despise that praise which depends on the acclamations of the vulgar. But if we are over anxious for the admiration of the better born and the better bred, this by no means proves that we are not vain, it only proves that our vanity has a better taste. Our appetite is not coarse enough perhaps to relish that popularity which ordinary ambition covets, but do we never feed in secret on the applauses of more distinguishing judges? Is not their having extolled our merit a confirmation of their discernment, and the chief ground of our high opinion of theirs?

But if any circumstance arise to induce them to change the too favorable opinion which they had formed of us, though their general character remain unimpeachable, and their general conduct as meritorious as when we most admired them, do we not begin to judge them unfavorably? Do we not begin to question their claim to that discernment which we had ascribed to them, to suspect the soundness of their judgment which we had so loudly commended? It is well if we do not entertain some doubt of the rectitude of their principles, as we probably do of the reality of their friendship. We do not candidly allow for the effect which prejudice, which misrepresentation, which party may produce even on an upright mind. Still less does it enter into our calculation that we may actually have deserved their disapprobation, that something in our conduct may have incurred the change in theirs.

It is no low attainment to detect this lurking injustice in our hearts, to strive against it, to pray against it, and especially to conquer it. We may reckon that we have acquired a sound principle of integrity when prejudice no longer blinds our judgment, nor resentment biasses our justice; when we do not make our opinion of another, depend on the opinion which we conceive he entertains of us. We must keep a just measure, and hold an even balance in judging of ourselves as well as of others. We must have no false estimate which shall incline to condemnation without, or to partiality within. The examining principle must be kept sound or our determination will not be exact. It must be at once a testimony of our rectitude, and an incentive to it.

In order to improve this principle, we should make it a test of our sincerity to search out and to commend the good qualities of those who do not like us. But this must be done without affectation, and without insincerity. We must practise no false candor. If we are not on our guard
we may be laying out for the praise of generosity, while we are only exercising a simple act of justice. These refinements of self-love are the dangers only of spirits of the higher order, but to such they are dangers.

The ingenuity of self-deceit is inexhaustible. If people extol us, we feel our good opinion of ourselves confirmed. If they dislike us, we do not think the worse of ourselves, but of them; it is not we who want merit, but they who want penetration. If we cannot refuse them discernment, we persuade ourselves that they are not so much insensible to our worth as envious of it. There is no shift, stratagem, or device, which we do not employ to make us stand well with ourselves.

We are too apt to calculate our own character unfairly in two ways: by referring to some one signal act of generosity, as if such acts were the common habit of our lives, and by treating our habitual faults, not as common habits, but occasional failures. There is scarcely any fault in another which offends us more than vanity, though perhaps there is none that really injures us so little. We have no patience that another should be as full of self-love as we allow ourselves to be; so full of himself as to have little leisure to attend to us. We are particularly quick-sighted to the smallest of his imperfections which interferes with our self-esteem, while we are lenient to his more grave offences, which, by not coming in contact with our vanity, do not shock our self-love.

Is it not strange, that though we love ourselves so much better than we love any other person, yet there is hardly one, however little we value him, that we had not rather be alone with, that we had not rather converse with, that we had not rather come to close quarters with, than ourselves? Scarcely one whose private history, whose thoughts, feelings, actions, and motives, we had not rather pry into than our own? Do we not use every art and contrivance to avoid getting at the truth of our own character? Do we not endeavor to keep ourselves ignorant of what every one else knows respecting our faults, and do we not account that man our enemy, who takes on himself the best office of a friend, that of opening to us our real state and condition?

The little satisfaction people find when they faithfully look within, makes them fly more eagerly to things without. Early practice and long habit might conquer the repugnance to look at home, and the fondness for looking
The sounder manifestation of zeal, but avoid the vices, admires, and excites, which, as their object, we can assume the zeal, and copy the activity, of Christian charity. It communicates to our conduct those proprieties and graces, manifested in the conduct of those who are actuated by a sounder motive. The difference lies in the ends proposed. The object of the one is to please God, of the other to obtain the praise of man.

Self-love, judging of the feelings of others by its own, is aware that nothing excites so much odium as its own character would do, if nakedly exhibited. We feel, by our own disgust at its exhibition in others, how much disgust we ourselves should excite, did we not invest it with the soft garb of gentle manners and a polished address. When therefore we would not condescend "to take the lowest place, to think others better than ourselves, to be
courteous and pitiful," on the true Scripture ground, polite-
ness steps in as the accredited substitute of humility, and
the counterfeit brilliant is willingly worn by those who will
not be at the expense of the jewel.

There is a certain elegance of mind which will often
restrain a well-bred man from sordid pleasures and gross
voluptuousness. He will be led by his good taste perhaps
not only to abhor the excesses of vice, but to admire the
theory of virtue. But it is only the crapule of vice which
he will abhor. Exquisite gratifications, sober luxury, in-
cessant, but not unmeasured enjoyment, form the principle
of his plan of life, and if he observe a temperance in his
pleasures, it is only because excess would take off the
dge, destroy the zest, and abridge the gratification. By
resisting gross vice, he flatters himself that he is a tempe-
rate man, and that he has made all the sacrifices which
self-denial imposes. Inwardly satisfied, he compares him-
self with those who have sunk into coarser indulgences,
joys his own superiority in health, credit, and unimpaired
faculties, and triumphs in the dignity of his own character.

There is, if the expression may be allowed, a sort of
religious self-deceit, an affectation of humility, which is
in reality full of self, which is entirely occupied with self;
which resolves all importance into what concerns self,
which only looks at things as they refer to self. This re-
ligious vanity operates in two ways. We not only fly out
at the imputation of the smallest individual fault, while at
the same time we affect to charge ourselves with more
corruption than is attributed to us; but on the other hand,
while we are lamenting our general want of all goodness,
we fight for every particle that is disputed. The one qual-
ity that is in question always happens to be the very one to
which we must lay claim, however deficient in others. Thus,
while renouncing the pretension to every virtue, "we de-
preciate ourselves into all." We had rather talk even of
our faults, than not occupy the foreground of the canvas.

Humility does not consist in telling our faults, but in
bearing to be told of them, in hearing them patiently and
even thankfully; in correcting ourselves when told, in not
hating those who tell us of them. If we were little in our
own eyes, and felt our real insignificance, we should avoid
false humility as much as mere obvious vanity; but we sel-
dom dwell on our faults except in a general way, and rare-
ly on those of which we are really guilty. We do it in the
hope of being contradicted, and thus of being confirmed in
SELF-LOVE.

the secret good opinion we entertain of ourselves. It is not enough that we inveigh against ourselves, we must in a manner forget ourselves. This oblivion of self from a pure principle, would go further towards our advancement in Christian virtue, than the most splendid actions performed on the opposite ground.

That self-knowledge which teaches us humility, teaches us compassion also. The sick pity the sick. They sympathize with the disorder of which they feel the symptoms in themselves. Self-knowledge also checks injustice, by establishing the equitable principle of showing the kindness we expect to receive; it represses ambition, by convincing us how little we are entitled to superiority; it renders adversity profitable, by letting us see how much we deserve it; it makes prosperity safe, by directing our hearts to him who confers it, instead of receiving it as the consequence of our own desert.

We even carry our self-importance to the foot of the throne of God. When prostrate there we are not required it is true, to forget ourselves, but we are required to remember HIM. We have indeed much sin to lament, but we have also much mercy to adore. We have much to ask, but we have likewise much to acknowledge: Yet our infinite obligations to God do not fill our hearts half as much as a petty uneasiness of our own; nor his infinite perfections as much as our own smallest want.

The great, the only effectual antidote to self-love, is to get the love of God and of our neighbor firmly rooted in the heart. Yet let us ever bear in mind, that dependence on our fellow creatures is as carefully to be avoided as love of them is to be cultivated. There is none but God on whom the principles of love and dependence form but one duty.
On the conduct of Christians in their intercourse with the Irreligious.

The combination of integrity with discretion is the precise point at which a serious Christian must aim in his intercourse, and especially in his debates on religion, with men of the opposite description. He must consider himself as not only having his own reputation but the honor of religion in his keeping. While he must on the one hand "set his face as a flint" against any thing that may be construed into compromise or evasion, into denying or concealing any Christian truth, or shrinking from any commanded duty, in order to conciliate favor; he must, on the other hand, be scrupulously careful never to maintain a Christian doctrine with an unchristian temper. In endeavoring to convince, he must be cautious not needlessly to irritate. He must distinguish between the honor of God and the pride of his own character, and never be pertinaciously supporting the one, under the pretence that he is only maintaining the other. The dislike thus excited against the disputant, is at once transferred to the principle, and the adversary's unfavorable opinion of religion is augmented by the faults of its champion. At the same time the intemperate champion puts it out of his power to be of any future service to the man whom his offensive manners have disgusted.

A serious Christian, it is true, feels an honest indignation at hearing those truths on which his everlasting hopes depend, lightly treated. He cannot but feel his heart rise at the affront offered to his Maker. But instead of calling down fire from heaven on the reviler's head, he will raise a secret supplication to the God of heaven in his favor, which, if it change not the heart of his opponent, will not only tranquillize his own, but soften it towards his adversary; for we cannot easily hate the man for whom we pray.

He who advocates the sacred cause of Christianity, should be particularly aware of fancying that his being religious will atone for his being disagreeable; that his orthodoxy will justify his uncharitableness, or his zeal make up for his indiscretion. He must not persuade himself that he has been serving God, when he has only been
gratifying his own resentment; when he has actually by a fiery defence prejudiced the cause which he might perhaps have advanced by temperate argument, and persuasive mildness. Even a judicious silence under great provocation is, in a warm temper, real forbearance. And though "to keep silence from good words" may be pain and grief, yet the pain and grief must be borne, and the silence must be observed.

We sometimes see imprudent religionists glory in the attacks which their own indiscretion has invited. With more vanity than truth they apply the strong and ill chosen term of persecution, to the sneers and ridicule which some impropriety of manner or some inadvertency of their own has occasioned. Now and then it is to be feared the censure may be deserved, and the high professor may possibly be but an indifferent moralist. Even a good man, a point we are not sufficiently ready to concede, may have been blameable in some instance, on which his censurers will naturally have kept a keen eye. On these occasions how forcibly does the pointed caution recur, which was implied by the divine moralist on the mount, and enforced by the apostle Peter, to distinguish for whose sake we are calumniated.

By the way, this sharp look out of worldly men on the professors of religion, is not without very important uses. While it serves to promote circumspection in the real Christian; the detection to which it leads in the case of the hollow professor, forms a broad and useful line of distinction between two classes of characters so essentially distinct, and yet so frequently, so unjustly, and so malevolently confounded.

The world believes, or at least affects to believe, that the correct and elegant minded religious man is blind to those errors and infirmities, that eccentricity and bad taste, that propensity to diverge from the straight line of prudence, which is discernible in some pious but ill-judging men, and which delight and gratify the enemies of true piety, as furnishing them with so plausible a ground for censure. But if the more judicious and better informed Christian bears with these infirmities, it is not that he does not clearly perceive and entirely condemn them. But he bears with what he disapproves for the sake of the zeal, the sincerity, the general usefulness of these defective characters: these good qualities are totally overlooked by the censurer, who is ever on the watch to aggravate the
failings which christian charity laments without extenuating. It bears with them from the belief that impropriety is less mischievous than carelessness, a bad judgment than a bad heart, and some little excesses of zeal than gross immorality, or total indifference.

We are not ignorant how much truth itself offends, though unassociated with any thing that is displeasing. This furnishes an important rule not to add to the unavoidable offence, by mixing the faults of our own character with the cause we support; because we may be certain that the enemy will take care never to separate them. He will always voluntarily maintain the pernicious association in his own mind. He will never think or speak of religion without connecting with it the real or imputed bad qualities of all the religious men he knows or has heard of.

Let not then the friends of truth unnecessarily increase the number of her enemies. Let her not have at once to sustain the assaults to which her divine character inevitably subjects her, and the obloquy to which the infirmities and foibles of her unjust, and if there are any such, her unworthy champions expose her.

But we sometimes justify our rash violence under color that our correct piety cannot endure the faults of others. The Pharisees overflowing with wickedness themselves, made the exactness of their own virtue a pretence for looking with horror on the publicans, whom our Saviour regarded with compassionate tenderness, while he reproved with keen severity the sins and especially the censoriousness of their accusers. "Charity," says an admirable French writer, "is that law which Jesus Christ came down to bring into the world, to repair the divisions which sin has introduced into it; to be the proof of the reconciliation of man with God, by bringing him into obedience to the divine law; to reconcile him to himself by subjugating his passions to his reason; and in fine to reconcile him to all mankind, by curing him of the desire to domineer over them."

But we put it out of our power to become the instruments of God in promoting the spiritual good of any one, if we stop up the avenue to his heart by violence or imprudence. We not only put it of our power to do good to all whom we disgust, but are we not liable to some responsibility for the failure of all the good we might have done them, had we not forfeited our influence by our indiscretion? What we do not to others in relieving their spirit-
ual as well as bodily wants, Christ will punish as not having been done to himself. This is one of the cases in which our own reputation is so inseparably connected with that of religion, that we should be tender of one for the sake of the other.

The modes of doing good in society are various. We should sharpen our discernment to discover them, and our zeal to put them in practice. If we cannot open a man's eyes to the truth of religion by our arguments, we may perhaps open them to its beauty by our moderation. Though he may dislike Christianity in itself, he may, from admiring the forbearance of the Christian, be at last led to admire the principle from which it flowed. If he have hitherto refused to listen to the written evidences of religion, the temper of her advocate may be a new evidence of so engaging a kind, that his heart may be opened by the sweetness of the one to the verities of the other. He will at least be brought to allow that that religion cannot be very bad, the fruits of which are so amiable. The conduct of the disciple may in time bring him to the feet of the master. A new combination may be formed in his mind. He may begin to see what he had supposed antipathies, reconciled, to unite two things which he thought as impossible to be brought together as the two poles, he may begin to couple candor with Christianity.

But if the mild advocate fail to convince, he may persuade; even if he fail to persuade, he will at least leave on the mind of the adversary such favorable impressions, as may induce him to inquire farther. He may be able to employ on some future occasion, to more effectual purpose, the credit which his forbearance will have obtained for him, whereas uncharitable vehemence will probably have forever shut the ears and closed the heart of his opponent against any future intercourse.

But even if the temperate pleader should not be so happy as to produce any considerable effect on the mind of his antagonist, he is in any case promoting the interests of his own soul; he is at least imitating the faith and patience of the saints; he is cultivating that "meek and quiet spirit" of which his blessed master gave at once the rule, the injunction, and the praise.

If "all bitterness, and clamor, and malice, and evil speaking" are expressly forbidden in ordinary cases, surely the prohibition must more peculiarly apply to the case of religious controversialists. Suppose Voltaire and Hume
had been left to take their measure of our religion (as one would really suppose they had) from the defences of Christianity by their very able contemporary Bishop Warburton. —When they saw this Goliath in talents and learning, dealing about his ponderous blows, attacking with the same powerful weapons, not the enemies only, but the friends of Christianity, who happened to see some points in a different light from himself; not meeting them as his opponents, but pouncing on them as his prey, not seeking to defend himself, but tearing them to pieces; waging offensive war, delighting in unprovoked hostility—when they saw him thus advocate the Christian cause with a spirit diametrically opposite to Christianity, would they not exultingly exclaim, in direct opposition to the exclamation of the apostolic age, "see how these Christians hate one another!" Whereas had his vast powers of mind and astonishing compass of knowledge been sanctified by the angelic meekness of Archbishop Leighton, they would have been compelled to acknowledge, if Christianity be false, it is after all so amiable that it deserves to be true. Might they not have applied to these two prelates what was said of Bossuet and Fenelon, "l'un prouve la Religion, l'autre la fait aimer."

If we studiously contrived how to furnish the most complete triumph to infidels, contentious theology would be our best contrivance. They enjoy the wounds the combatants inflict on each other, not so much from the personal injury which either might sustain, as from the conviction that every attack, however it may terminate, weakens the common cause. In all engagements with a foreign foe, they know that Christianity must come off triumphant. All their hopes are founded on a civil war.

If a forbearing temper should be maintained towards the irreligious, how much more by the professors of religion towards each other. As it is a lamentable instance of human infirmity that there is often much hostility carried on by good men who profess the same faith; so it is a striking proof of the litigious nature of man that this spirit is less excited by broad distinctions, (such as conscience ought not to reconcile) than by shades of opinion, shades so few and slight, that the world would not know they existed at all, if by their animosities the disputants were not so impatient to inform it.

While we should never withhold a clear and honest avowal of the great principles of our religion, let us dis
creely avoid dwelling on inconsiderable distinctions, on which, as they do not affect the essentials either of faith or practice, we may allow another to maintain his opinion, while we steadily hold fast our own. But in religious as in military warfare, it almost seems as if the hostility were great in proportion to the littleness of the point contested. We all remember when two great nations were on the point of being involved in war for a spot of ground* in another hemisphere, so little known that the very name had scarcely reached us; so inconsiderable that its possession would have added nothing to the strength of either. In civil too, as well as in national and theological disputes, there is often most stress laid on the most indifferent things. Why would the Spanish Government some years ago so little consult the prejudices of the people, as nearly to produce an insurrection, by issuing an edict for them to relinquish the ancient national dress? Why was the security of the state, and the lives of the subjects put to hazard for a cloak and a jerkin? For the obstinate people made as firm a stand against this trifling requisition, as they could have made for the preservation of their civil or religious liberty, if they had been so happy as to possess either—a stand as firm as they are now nobly making in defence of their country and their independence.

Without invidiously enumerating any of the narrowing names which split Christianity in pieces, and which so unhappily drive the subjects of the Prince of peace into interminable war, and range them into so many hostile bands, not against the common enemy, but against each other; we cannot forbear regretting that less temper is preserved amongst these near neighbors in local situation and in Christian truth, than if the attack of either were levelled at Jews, Turks, or Infidels.

Is this that catholic spirit which embraces with the love of charity, though not of approbation, the whole offspring of our common Father—which in the arms of its large affection, without vindicating their faults or adopting their opinions, “takes every creature in of every kind,” and which like its gracious Author, “would not that any thing should perish?”

The preference of remote to approximating opinions is, however, by no means confined to the religious world. The author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,
though so passionate an admirer of the prophet of Arabia as to raise a suspicion of his own Islamism; though so rapturous an eulogist of the apostate Julian as to raise a suspicion of his own polytheism, yet with an inconsistency not uncommon to unbelief he treats the stout orthodoxy of the vehement Athanasius, with more respect than he shows to the "scanty creed" of a contemporary philoso-
pher and theologian, whose cold and comfortless doctrines were much less removed from his own.

Might not the twelve monsters which even the incredible strength and labor of Hercules found so hard to subdue, be interpreted as an ingenious allegory, by which were meant twelve popular prejudices? But though the hero went forth armed preternaturally, the goddess of wisdom herself furnishing him with his helmet, and the god of eloquence with his arrows, yet it is not certain that he conquered the religious prejudices, not of the world, but even of Argos and Mycenae; at least they were not among his earlier conquests; they were not serpents which an infant hand could strangle. They were more probably the fruitful hydra, which lost nothing by losing a head, a new head always starting up to supply the incessant decapitation. But though he slew the animal at last, might not its envenomed gore in which his arrows were dipped, be the perennial fountain in which persecuting bigotry, harsh intolerance, and polemical acrimony, have continued to dip their pens?

It is a delicate point to hit upon, neither to vindicate the truth in so coarse a manner as to excite a prejudice against it, nor to make any concessions in the hope of obtaining popularity. "If it be possible as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" can no more mean that we should exercise that false candor which conciliates at the expense of sincerity, than that we should defend truth with so intolerant a spirit, as to injure the cause by discrediting the advocate.

As the apostle beautifully obtests his brethren, not by the power and dignity, but "by the meekness and gentleness of Christ," so every Christian should adorn his doctrine by the same endearing qualities, evincing by the brightness of the polish, the solidity of the substance. But he will carefully avoid adopting the external appearance of these amiable tempers as substitutes for piety, when they are only its ornaments. Condescending manners may be one of the numberless modifications of selfishness, and reputation is thus often obtained, where it is not fairly
earned. Carefully to examine whether he please others for their good to edification, or in order to gain praise and popularity, is the bounden duty of a Christian.

We should not be angry with the blind for not seeing, nor with the proud for not acknowledging their blindness. We ourselves perhaps were once as blind; happy if we are not still as proud. If not in this instance, in others perhaps they might have made more of our advantages than we have done; we, under their circumstances, might have been more perversely wrong than they are, had we not been treated by the enlightened with more patient tenderness than we are disposed to exercise towards them. Tyre and Sidon we are assured by truth itself, would have repented, had they enjoyed the privileges which Chorazin and Bethsaida threw away. Surely we may do that for the love of God, and for the love of our opponent’s soul, which well-bred men do through a regard to politeness. Why should a Christian be more ready to offend against the rule of charity, than a gentleman against the law of decorum? Candor in judging is like disinterestedness in acting; both are statutes of the royal law.

There is also a kind of right which men feel they possess to their own opinion. With this right it is often more difficult to part than even with the opinion itself. If our object be the real good of our opponent; if it be to promote the cause of truth, and not to contest for victory, we shall remember this. We shall consider what a value we put upon our own opinion: why should his, though a false one, be less dear to him, if he believes it true? This consideration will teach us not to expect too much at first. It will teach us the prudence of seeking some general point, in which we cannot fail to agree. This will let him see that we do not differ from him for the sake of differing; which conciliating spirit of ours may bring him to a temper to listen to arguments on topics where our disagreement is wider.

In disputing, for instance, with those who wholly reject the divine authority of the scriptures, we can gain nothing by quoting them, and insisting vehemently on the proof which is to be drawn from them, in support of the point in debate; their unquestionable truth availing nothing with those who do not allow it. But if we take some common ground on which both the parties can stand, and reason from the analogies of natural religion, and the way in which God proceeds in the known and acknowledged course of his provi-
dence, to the way in which he deals with us, and has declared he will deal with us, as the God revealed in the Bible: our opponent may be struck with the similarity and be put upon a track of consideration, and be brought to a temper in considering which may terminate in the happiest manner. He may be brought at length to be less averse from listening to us, on those grounds and principles of which probably he might otherwise never have seen the value.

Where a disputant of another description cannot endure what he sneeringly calls the strictness of evangelical religion, he will have no objection to acknowledge the momentous truths of man's responsibility to his Maker, of the omniscience, omnipresence, majesty, and purity of God. Strive then to meet him on these grounds, and respectfully inquire if he can sincerely affirm that he is acting up to the truths he acknowledges?—If he is living in all respects as an accountable being ought to live?—If he is really conscious of acting as a being ought to act, who knows that he is continually acting under the eye of a just and holy God? You will find he cannot stand on these grounds. Either he must be contented to receive the truth as revealed in the gospel, or be convicted of inconsistency, or self deceit, or hypocrisy. You will at least drive him off his own ground which he will find untenable, if you cannot bring him over to yours. But while the enemy is effecting his retreat, do not you cut off the means of his return.

Some Christians approve Christianity as it is knowledge, rather than as it is principle. They like it as it yields a grand object of pursuit; as it enlarges their view of things, as it opens to them a wider field of inquiry, a fresh source of discovery, an additional topic of critical investigation. They consider it rather as extending the limits of their research, than as a means of ennobling their affections. It furnishes their understanding with a fund of riches on which they are eager to draw, not so much for the improvement of the heart as of the intellect. They consider it as a thesis on which to raise interesting discussion, rather than as premises from which to draw practical conclusions, as an incontrovertible truth, rather than as a rule of life.

There is something in the exhibition of sacred subjects given us by these persons, which according to our conception, is not only mistaken but pernicious. We refer to their treatment of religion as a mere science divested of its practical application, and taken rather as a code of philo-
sophistical speculations than of active principles. To explain our meaning, we might perhaps venture to except against the choice of topics almost exclusively made by these writers.

After they have spent half a life upon the evidences, the mere vestibule, so necessary, we allow, to be passed into the temple of Christianity, we accompany them into their edifice, and find it composed of materials but too coincident with their former taste. Questions of criticism, of grammar, of history, of metaphysics, of mathematics, and of all the sciences, meet us, in the very place of that which St. Paul tells us "is the end of all"—that is, "Charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned, from which" he adds "some having swerved, have turned aside to vain jangling."*

We are very far from applying the latter term to all scientific discussions in religion, of which we should be the very last to deny the use, or question the necessity. Our main objection lies to the preponderance given to such topics by our controversialists in their divinity, and to the spirit too often manifested in their discussions. A preponderance it is, which makes us sometimes fear they consider these things rather as religion itself, than as helps to understand it, as the substitutes, not the allies of devotion. At the same time, a cold and philosophical spirit often studiously maintained, seems to confirm the suspicion, that religion with them is not accidentally, but essentially, and solely an exercise of the wits, and a field for the display of intellectual prowess—as if the salvation of souls were a thing by the bye.

These prize fighters in theology remind us of the philosophers of other schools: we feel as if we were reading Newton against Des Cartes, or the theory of caloric in opposition to phlogiston. "Nous le regardons," says the eloquent Saurin upon some religious subject "pour la plupart, de la même maniere, dont on envisage les idées d'un ancien Philosophe sur le gouvernement."—The practical part of religion in short is forgotten, is lost in its theories: and what is worst of all, a temper hostile to the spirit of Christianity is employed to defend or illustrate its positions.

* See 1 Tim. 1, 5, 6, also verse 4, in which the apostle hints at certain "fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions rather than godly edifying which is by faith." We dare not say how closely this description applies to some modern controvertists in theology.
This latter effect might be traced beyond the foregoing causes, to another nearly allied to them—the habit of treating religion as a science capable of demonstration. On a subject evidently admitting but of moral evidence, we lament to see questions dogmatically proved, instead of being temperately argued. Nay we could almost smile at the sight of some intricate and barren novelty in religion demonstrated to the satisfaction of some one ingenious theorist, who draws upon himself instantly a hundred confutations of every position he maintains. The ulterior stages of the debate are often such as might "make angels weep." And when we remember that even in the most important questions, involving eternal interests, "probability is the very guide of life"* we could most devoutly wish, that on subjects, to say the least, not "generally necessary to salvation" infallibility were not the claim of the disputant, or personal animosity the condition of his failure.

Such speculatists who are more anxious to make proselytes to an opinion, than converts to a principle, will not be so likely to convince an opponent, as the Christian who is known to act up to his convictions, and whose genuine piety will put life and heart into his reasonings. The opponent probably knows already all the ingenious arguments which books supply. Ingenuity therefore, if he be a candid man, will not be so likely to touch him, as that "godly sincerity" which he cannot but perceive the heart of his antagonist is dictating to his lips. There is a simple energy in pure Christian truth which a factitious principle imitates in vain. The "knowledge which puffeth up" will make few practical converts unaccompanied with the "charity which edifieth."

To remove prejudices, then, is the bounden duty of a Christian, but he must take care not to remove them by conceding what integrity forbids him to concede. He must not wound his conscience to save his credit. If an ill-bred roughness disgusts another, a dishonest complaisance undoes himself. He must remove all obstructions to the reception of truth, but the truth itself he must not adulterate. In clearing away the impediment, he must secure the principle.

If his own reputation be attacked, he must defend it by every lawful means; nor will he sacrifice the valuable possession to any demand but that of conscience, to any call

* Butler's Introduction to "The Analogy."
but the imperative call of duty. If his good name be put in competition with any other earthly good, he will preserve it, however dear may be the good he relinquishes; but, if the competition lie between his reputation and his conscience, he has no hesitation in making the sacrifice, costly as it is. A feeling man struggles for his fame as for his life, but if he be a Christian, he parts with it, for he knows that it is not the life of his soul.

For the same reason that we must not be over anxious to vindicate our fame, we must be careful to preserve it from any unjust imputation. The great apostle of the Gentiles has set us an admirable example in both respects, and we should never consider him in one point of view, without recollecting his conduct in the other. So profound is his humility that he declares himself "less than the least of all saints." Not content with this comparative depreciation, he proclaims his actual corruptions. "In me, that is, in my flesh, there is no good thing." Yet this deep self-abasement did not prevent him from asserting his own calumniated worth, from declaring that he was not behind the very "chiefest of the apostles"—again—"As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting," &c. He then enumerates with a manly dignity, tempered with a noble modesty, a multitude of instances of his unparalleled sufferings and his unrivalled zeal.

Where only his own personal feelings were in question, how self-abasing! how self-annihilating! but where the unjust imputation involved the honor of Christ and the credit of religion, "what carefulness it wrought in him; yea what clearing of himself; yea what indignation; yea what vehement desire; yea what zeal!"

While we rejoice in the promises annexed to the beatitudes, we should be cautious of applying to ourselves promises which do not belong to us, particularly that which is attached to the last beatitude. When our fame is attacked, let us carefully inquire, if we are "suffering for righteousness' sake," or for our own faults; let us examine, whether we may not deserve the censures we have incurred? Even if we are suffering in the cause of God, may we not have brought discredit on that holy cause by our imprudence, our obstinacy, our vanity; by our zeal without knowledge, and our earnestness without temper? Let us inquire, whether our revilers have not some foundation for the charge? Whether we have not sought our own glory more than that of God? Whether we are not more disappointed
at missing that revenue of praise, which we thought our good works were entitled to bring us in, than at the wound religion may have sustained? Whether, though our views were right on the whole, their purity was not much alloyed by human mixtures? Whether, neglecting to count the cost, we did not expect unmixed approbation, uninterrupted success, and a full tide of prosperity and applause, totally forgetting the reproaches received, and the obloquy sustained by "the Man of sorrows."

If we can, on an impartial review, acquit ourselves as to the general purity of our motives, the general integrity of our conduct, the unfeigned sincerity of our endeavors, then we may indeed, though with deep humility, take to ourselves the comfort of this divine beatitude. When we really find, that men only speak evil of us for his sake in whose cause we have labored, however that labor may have been mingled with imperfection, we may indeed "rejoice and be exceeding glad." Submission may be elevated into gratitude, and forgiveness into love.

CHAP. XV.

On the propriety of introducing Religion in general conversation.

May we be allowed to introduce here an opinion warmly maintained in the world, and which indeed strikes at the root of all rules for the management of religious debate recommended in the preceding chapter? It is, that the subject of religion ought on no occasion to be introduced in mixed company; that the diversity of sentiment upon it is so great, and so nearly connected with the tenderest feelings of our minds, as to be liable to lead to heat and contention: Finally, that it is too grave and solemn a topic to be mixed in the miscellaneous circle of social discourse, much less in the festive effusions of convivial cheerfulness. Now, in answer to these allegations, we must at least insist, that should religion, on other grounds, be found entitled to social discussion, the last observation, if true, would prove convivial cheerfulness incompatible with the spirit and practice of religion, rather than religion inad-
possible into cheerful parties. And it is certainly a retort difficult of evasion, that where to introduce religion herself is to endanger her honor, there she rather suffers in reputation by the presence of her friend. The man endeared by conviction to his religion, will never bear to be long, much less to be statedly separated from the object of his affections: and he whose zeal once determined him "to know nothing" amongst his associates, "but Jesus Christ, and him crucified," never could have dreamed of a latitude of interpretation which would admit a Christian into scenes where every thing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified, might be recognized with credit.

These principles appear so plain and incontrovertible, that the question seems rather to call for a different statement: viz. why religion should not be deemed admissible into every social meeting and friendly circle in which a Christian himself would choose to be found? That it is too weighty and important a subject for discussion, is an argument, which, standing alone, assumes the gross absurdity, that either men never talk of that which most nearly interests them, or that when they do, they talk improperly. They will not, it is true, introduce a private concern, however important, in which no one is interested but themselves. But in the subject of religion, who is not interested? Or where will topics be found more universal in their application to all times, persons, places, and circumstances, as well as more important, than those which relate to the eternal welfare of mankind?

Nor will it be avowed with greater color of reason, that topics so important suffer in point of gravity, or in the respect of mankind, by frequent discussion. We never observed men grow indifferent to their health, their affairs, their friends, their country, in proportion as these were made the subjects of their familiar discourse. On the contrary, oblivion has been noticed as the offspring of silence. The man who never mentions his friend, is, we think, in general, most likely to forget him. And far from deeming the name of one, greater than any earthly friend, "taken in vain," when mentioned discreetly in conversation, we generally find him most remembered and respected in secret, by those whose memories are occasionally refreshed by a reference to his word and authority in public. "Familiarity," indeed, we have been told, "produces contempt"; a truism, on which we are convinced many persons, honestly, though blindly, rest their habitual, and
even systematic reserve on religious subjects. But "familiarity" in our mind has reference rather to the manner, than to the act, of introducing religion. To us it is synonymous with a certain trite and trivial repetition of serious remarks, evidently "to no profit," which we sometimes hear from persons familiarized, rather by education than feeling, to the language of piety.

More particularly we refer it to a still more criminal habit, which, to their disgrace, some professors of religion share with the profane, of raising a laugh by the introduction of a religious observation, or even a scriptural quotation. "To court a grin when we should woo a soul," is surely an abuse of religion, as well in the parlor as the pulpit. Nor has the senate itself been always exempt from this impropriety. Dr. Johnson has long since pronounced a jest drawn from the Bible, the vulgarest because the easiest of all jests. And far from perverting religious topics to such a purpose himself, a feeling Christian would not often be found, where such would be the probable consequence of offering a pious sentiment in company.

That allusions involving religious questions are often productive of dispute and altercation, is a fact, which, though greatly exaggerated, must yet, in a degree, be admitted. This circumstance may in some measure account for the singular reception which a religious remark is often observed to meet with in the world. It is curious to notice the surprise and alarm which, on such occasions, will frequently pervade the party present. The remark is received as a stranger-guest, of which no one knows the quality or intentions: And, like a species of intellectual foundling, it is cast upon the company without a friend to foster its infancy, or to own any acquaintance with the parent. A fear of consequences prevails. It is obvious that the feeling is—"We know not into what it may grow; it is therefore safer to stifle it in the birth." This, if not the avowed, is the implied sentiment.

But is not this delicacy, this mauvaise honte, so peculiar perhaps to our countrymen, on religious subjects, the very cause which operates so unfavorably upon that effect which it labors to obviate? Is not the very infrequency of moral or religious observations, a sufficient account to be given both of the perplexity and the irritation said to be consequent upon their introduction? And were not religion (we mean such religious topics as may legitimately arise in mixed society) banished so much as it is from conver-
sation, might not its occasional recurrence become by
degrees as natural, perhaps as interesting, certainly as in-
structive, and after all as safe, as "a close committee on
the weather," or any other of the authorised topics which
are about as productive of amusement as of instruction?
People act as if religion were to be regarded at a distance,
as if even a respectful ignorance were to be preferred to a
more familiar approach. This reserve, however, does not
give an air of respect, so much as of mystery, to religion.
An able writer * has observed, "that was esteemed
the most sacred part of pagan devotion which was the most
impure, and the only thing that was commendable in it is,
that it was kept a great mystery." He approves of nothing
in this religion but the modesty of withdrawing itself from
the eyes of the world. But Christianity requires not to be
shrouded in any such mysterious recesses. She does not,
like the Eastern monarchs, owe her dignity to her conceal-
ment. She is, on the contrary, most honored where most
known, and most revered where most clearly visible.
It will be obvious, that hints rather than arguments, be-
long to our present undertaking. In this view, we may
perhaps be excused if we offer a few general observations
upon the different occasions on which a well-regulated
mind would be solicitous to introduce religion into social
discourse. The person possessed of such a mind, would
be mainly anxious, in a society of Christians, that something
should appear indicative of their profession. He would
accordingly feel a strong desire to effect it when he plainly
perceived his company engaged on no other topic, either
innocently entertaining, or rationally instructive. This
desire, however, would by no means cloud his brow, give
an air of impatience to his countenance, or render him
inattentive to the general tone and temper of the circle.
On the contrary, he would endeavor to feel additional in-
terest in his neighbor's suggestions, in proportion as he
hoped in turn to attract notice to his own. He would show
long forbearance to the utmost extent of conscientious tol-
eration. In the prosecution of his favorite design, he
would never attempt a forced or unseasonable allusion to
serious subjects; a caution requiring the nicest judgment
and discrimination, most particularly where he felt the sen-
timents or the zeal of his company to be not congenial with
his own. His would be the spirit of the prudent mariner,

* Bishop Sherlock.
who does not approach even his native shore, without carefully watching the winds, and sounding the channels; knowing well that a temporary delay, even on an unfriendly element, is preferable to a hasty landing his company, on shore indeed, but upon the point of a rock.

Happily for our present purpose, the days we live in afford circumstances both of foreign and domestic occurrence, of every possible variety of color and connection, so as to leave scarcely any mind unfurnished with a store of progressive remarks, by which the most instructive truths may be approached through the most obvious topics. And a prudent mind will study to make its approaches to such an ultimate object, progressive: it will know also where to stop, rather indeed out of regard to others than to itself. And in the manly avowal of its sentiments, avoiding as well what is canting in utterance as technical in language, it will make them at once appear not the ebullition of an ill-educated imagination, but the result of a long exercised understanding.

Nothing will be more likely to attract attention, or secure respect to your remarks, than the good taste in which they are delivered. On common topics we reckon him the most elegant speaker, whose pronunciation and accent are so free from all peculiarities that it cannot be determined to what place he owes his birth. A polished critic of Rome accuses one of the finest of her historians of provinciality. This is a fault obvious to less enlightened critics, since the Attic herb-woman could detect the provincial dialect of a great philosopher. Why must religion have her Patavinity? Why must a Christian adopt the quaintness of a party, or a scholar the idiom of the illiterate? Why should a valuable truth be combined with a vulgar or fanatical expression? If either would offend when separate, how inevitably must they disgust when the one is mistakenly intended to set off the other. Surely this is not enchasing our "apples of gold in pictures of silver."

We must not close this part of our subject without alluding to another, and still more delicate introduction of religion, in the way of reproof. Here is indeed a point in religious conduct to which we feel it a boldness to make any reference at all. Bold, indeed, is that casuist who would lay down general rules on a subject where the consciences of men seem to differ so widely from each other, and feeble too often will be his justest rules where the feelings of timidity or delicacy rush in with a force which
sweeps down many a land-mark erected for its own guidance, even by conscience itself.

Certainly, much allowance, perhaps respect, is due in cases of very doubtful decision, to those feelings which, after the utmost self-regulation of mind, are found to be irresistible. And certainly the habits and modes of address attached to refined society, are such as to place personal observations on a very different footing to that on which they stand by nature.—A frown, even a cold and disapproving look, may be a reception which the profane expression or loose action of a neighbor of rank and opulence may have never before encountered from his flatterers or convivial companions. A vehement censure in his case might inflame his resentment without amending his fault. Whether the attempt be to correct a vice or rectify an error, one object should ever be steadily kept in view, to conciliate rather than to contend, to inform but not to insult, to evince that we assume not the character of a dictator, but the office of a Christian friend; that we have the best interests of the offender, and the honor of religion at heart, and that to reprove is so far from a gratification that it is a trial to ourselves; the effort of conscience, not the effect of choice.

The feelings, therefore, of the person to be admonished should be most scrupulously consulted. The admonition, if necessarily strong, explicit, and personal, should yet be friendly, temperate, and well bred. An offence, even though publicly committed, is generally best reproved in private, perhaps in writing.—Age, superiority of station, previous acquaintance, above all, that sacred profession to which the honor of religion is happily made a personal concern, are circumstances which especially call for, and sanction the attempt recommended. And he must surely be unworthy his Christian vocation, who would not conscientiously use any influence or authority which he might chance to possess, in discountenancing or rectifying the delinquency he condemns.

We are, indeed, as elsewhere, after the closest reflection and longest discussion, often forced into the general conclusion that "a good heart is the best casuist." And doubtless, where true Christian benevolence towards man meets in the same mind with an honest zeal for the glory of God, a way will be found, let us rather say will be opened, for the right exercise of this, as of every virtuous disposition.
Let us ever remember what we have so often insisted on, that self-denial is the groundwork, the indispensable requisite for every Christian virtue; that without the habitual exercise of this principle we shall never be followers of him "who pleased not himself." And when we are called by conscience to the largest use of it in practice, we must arm ourselves with the highest considerations for the trial: we must consider him, who (through his faithful reproofs) "endured the contradiction of sinners against himself." And when even from Moses we hear the truly evangelical precept, "thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy brother, and not suffer sin upon him;" we must duly weigh how strongly its performance is enforced upon ourselves, by the conduct of one greater than Moses, who expressly "suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his footsteps."

CHAP. XVI.

Christian Watchfulness.

Of all the motives to vigilance and self-discipline which Christianity presents, there is not one more powerful than the danger, from which even religious persons are not exempt, of slackening in zeal and declining in piety. Would we could affirm, that coldness in religion is confined to the irreligious! If it be melancholy to observe an absence of Christianity where no great profession of it was ever made, it is far more grievous to mark its declension where it once appeared not only to exist, but to flourish. We feel on the comparison, the same distinct sort of compassion with which we contemplate the pecuniary distresses of those who have been always indigent, and of those who have fallen into want from a state of opulence. Our concern differs not only in degree but in kind.

This declension is one of the most awakening calls to watchfulness, to humility and self-inspection, which religion can make to him "who thinketh he standeth"—which it can make to him who, sensible of his own weakness, ought to feel the necessity "of strengthening the things which remain that are ready to die."
If there is not any one circumstance which ought more to alarm and quicken the Christian, than that of finding himself grow languid and indifferent, after having made not only a profession, but a progress, so there is not a more reasonable motive of triumph to the profane, not one cause which excites in him a more plausible ground of suspicion, either that there never was any truth in the profession of the person in question, or which is a more fatal, and, to such a mind, a more natural conclusion, that there is no truth in religion itself. At best, he will be persuaded that this can only be a faint and feeble principle, the impulse of which is so soon exhausted, and which is by no means found sufficiently powerful to carry on its votary throughout his course. He is assured that piety is only an outer garment, put on for show, or convenience, and that when it ceases to be wanted for either, it is laid aside. In these unhappy instances the evil seldom ceases with him who causes it. The inference becomes general, that all religious men are equally unsound, or equally deluded, only that some are more prudent, or more fortunate, or greater hypocrites, than others. After the falling away of one promising character, the old suspicion recurs, and is confirmed, and the defection of others pronounced to be infallible.

There seems to be this marked distinction in the different opinions which religious and worldly men entertain respecting human corruption. The candid Christian is contented to believe it, as an indisputable general truth, while he is backward to suspect the wickedness of the individual, nor does he allow himself to give full credit to particular instances without proof. The man of the world, on the contrary, who denies the general principle, is extremely prone to suspect the individual. Thus his knowledge of mankind not only furnishes a proof, but outstrips the truth, of the doctrine; though he denies it as a proposition of scripture, he is eager to establish it as a fact of experiment.

But the probability is, that the man, who by his departure from the principles with which he appeared to set out, so much gratifies the thoughtless, and grieves the serious mind, never was a sound and genuine Christian. His religion was perhaps taken up on some accidental circumstance, built on some false ground, produced by some evanescent cause; and though it cannot be fairly pronounced that he intended by his forward profession, and
prominent zeal, to deceive others, it is probable that he himself was deceived. Perhaps he had made too sure of himself. His early profession was probably rather bold and ostentatious; he had imprudently fixed his stand on ground so high as to be not easily tenable, and from which a descent would be but too observable. While he thought he never could be too secure of his own strength, he allowed himself to be too censorious on the infirmities of others, especially of those whom he had apparently outstripped, and who, though they had started together, he had left behind him in the race.

Might it not be a safer course, if in the outset of the Christian life, a modest and self-distrusting humility were to impose a temporary restraint on the forwardness of outward profession. A little knowledge of the human heart, a little suspicion of the deceitfulness of his own, would not only moderate the intemperance of an ill-understood zeal, should the warm convoy become an established Christian, but would save the credit of religion, which will receive a fresh wound, in the possible event of his desertion from her standard.

Some of the most distinguished Christians in this country began their religious career with this graceful humility. They would not suffer their change of character and their adoption of new principles, and a new course, to be blazoned abroad, as the affectionate zeal of their confidential friends would have advised, till the principles they had adopted were established, and worked into habits of piety; till time and experience had evinced that the grace of God had not been bestowed on them in vain. Their progress proved to be such as might have been inferred from the modesty of their outset. They have gone on with a perseverance which difficulties have only contributed to strengthen, and experience to confirm; and will, through divine aid, doubtless, go on, shining more and more unto the perfect day.

But to return to the less steady convert. Perhaps religion was only, as we have hinted elsewhere, one pursuit among many which he had taken up when other pursuits failed, and which he now lays down, because his faith not being rooted and grounded, fails also;—or the temptations arising from without might concur with: the failure within. If vanity be his infirmity, he will shrink from the pointed disapprobation of his superiors. If the love of novelty be his besetting weakness, the very peculiarity and strictness
of religion, the very marked departure from the "gay and primrose path" in which he had before been accustomed to walk, which first attracted, now repel him. The attention which his early deviation from the manners of the world drew upon him, and which once flattered, now disgusts him. The very opposition which once animated, now cools him. He is discouraged at the near view, sub-dued by the required practice, of that Christian self-denial which, as a speculation, had appeared so delightful. Perhaps his fancy had been fired by some acts of Christian heroism, which he felt an ambition to imitate: a feeling which tales of martial prowess, or deeds of chivalry, something that, promising celebrity and exciting emulation, had often kindled before. The truth is, religion had only taken hold of his imagination, his heart had been left out of the question.

Or he had, in the twilight of his first awakening, seen religion only as something to be believed—he now finds that much is to be done in the new life, and much which was habitual to the old one, left undone. Above all he did not reckon on the consistency which the Christian life demands. Warm affections rendered the practice of some right actions easy to him; but he did not include in his faulty and imperfect scheme, the self-denial, the perseverance, the renouncing of his own will and his own way, the evil report, as well as the good report, to which every man pledges himself, when he enlists under the banner of Christ. The cross which it was easy to venerate, he finds it hard to bear.

Or religion might be adopted when he was in affliction, and he is now happy;—when he was in bad circumstances, and he is now grown affluent. Or it might be assumed, as something wanting to his recommendation to that party or project by which he wished to make his way; as something that would better enable him to carry certain points which he had in view; something that, with the new acquaintance he wished to cultivate, might obliterate certain defects in his former conduct, and white-wash a somewhat sullied reputation.

Or in his now more independent situation, it may be he is surrounded by temptations, softened by blandishments, allured by pleasures, which he never expected would arise to weaken his resolutions. These new enchantments make it not so easy to be pious, as when he had little to lose and every thing to desire. as when the world wore a frowning,
and religion an inviting aspect. Or he is, perhaps, by the
vicissitudes of life, transferred from a sober and humble
society, where to be religious was honorable, to a more
fashionable set of associates, where, as the disclosure of
his piety would add nothing to his credit, he set out with
taking pains to conceal it, till it has fallen into that gradual
oblivion, which is the natural consequence of its being kept
out of sight.

But we proceed to a far more interesting and important
character. The one indeed whom we have been slightly
sketching, may by his inconstancy do much harm, the one
on which we are about to animadvert, might by his con-
sistency and perseverance effect essential good. Even the
sincere, and, to all appearance, the established Christian,
especially if his situation in life be easy, and his course
smooth and prosperous, had need keep a vigilant eye upon
his own heart. For such a one it will not be sufficient that
he keep his ground, if he do not advance in it. Indeed, it
will be a sure proof that he has gone back, if he has not
advanced.

In a world so beset with snares, various are the causes
which may possibly occasion, in even good men, a slow,
but certain decline in piety. A decline scarcely percepti-
ble at first, but which becomes more visible in its subse-
quent stages. When, therefore, we suspect our hearts of
any declension in piety, we should not compare ourselves
with what we were in the preceding week or month, but
with what we were at the supposed height of our character.
Though the alteration was not perceptible in its gradual
progress, one shade melting into the next, and each losing
its distinctness, yet, when the two remote states are brought
into contrast, the change will be strikingly obvious.

Among other causes, may be assigned the indiscreet
forming of some worldly connection: especially that of
marriage. In this connection, for union it cannot be called,
it is to be lamented that the irreligious more frequently
draw away the religious to their side, than that the contra-
ry takes place; a circumstance easily accounted for by
those who are at all acquainted with the human heart.

Or the sincere but incautious Christian may be led, by
a strong affection which assumes the shape of virtue, into
a fond desire of establishing his children advantageously
in the world, into methods, which if not absolutely incor-
rect, are yet ambiguous at the best. In order to raise
those whom he loves to a station above their level, he may
be tempted, while self-deceit will teach him to sanctify the deed by the motive, to make some little sacrifices of principle, some little abatements of that strict rectitude, for which, in the abstract, no man would more strenuously contend. And as it may be in general observed, that the most amiable minds are most susceptible of the strongest natural affections; of course, the very tenderness of the heart lays such characters peculiarly open to a danger to which the unfeeling and the obdurate are less exposed.

If the person in question be of the sacred order, no small danger may arise from his living under the eye of an irreligious, but rich and bountiful patron. It is his duty to make religion appear amiable in his eyes. He ought to conciliate his good will by every means which rectitude can sanction. But though his very piety will stimulate his discretion in the adoption of those means, he will take care never to let his discretion intrench on his integrity.

If he be under obligations to him, he may be in danger of testifying his gratitude, and furthering his hopes by some electioneering manoeuvres, and by too much electioneering society. He may, unawares, be tempted to too much conformity to his friend’s habits, to too much conviviality in his society. And when he witnesses so much kindness and urbanity in his manners, possibly so much usefulness and benevolence in his life, he may be even tempted to suspect that he himself may be wrong; to accuse himself of being somewhat churlish in his own temper, a little too austere in his habits, and rather hard in his judgment of a man so amiable. He will be still more likely to fall into this error if he expects a favor, than if he has obtained it; for though it is not greatly to the honor of human nature, we daily see how much keener are the feelings which are excited by hope than those which are raised by gratitude. The favor which has been already conferred excites a temperate, that which we are looking for, a fervid feeling.

These relaxing feelings and these softened dispositions, aided by the seducing luxury of the table, and the bewitching splendor of the apartment, by the soft accommodations which opulence exhibits, and the desires which they are too apt to awaken in the dependent, may, not impossibly, lead by degrees to a criminal timidity in maintaining the purity of his own principles, in supporting the strictness of his own practice. He may gradually lose somewhat of the dignity of his professional, and of the sobriety of his Christian character. He may be brought to forfeit the in-
dependence of his mind; and in order to magnify his fortune, may neglect to magnify his office.

Even here, from an increasing remissness in self-examination, he may deceive himself by persisting to believe—for the films are now grown thicker over his spiritual sight—that his motives are defensible. Were not his discernment laboring under a temporary blindness, he would repel the character which interested views have insensibly drawn him in to act. He would be as much astonished to be told that this character was become his own, as was the royal offender, when the righteous boldness of the prophet pronounced the heart-appalling words, “Thou art the man.”

Still he continues to flatter himself that the reason of his diminished opposition to the faults of his friend, is not because he has a more lucrative situation in view, but because he may by a slight temporary concession, and a short suspension of a severity which he begins to fancy he has carried too far, secure for his future life a more extensive field of usefulness, in the benefice which is hanging over his head.

In the mean time, hope and expectation so fill his mind, that he insensibly grows cold in the prosecution of his positive duties. He begins to lament that in his present situation he can make but few converts, that he sees but small effects of his labors; not perceiving that God may have withdrawn his blessing from a ministry which is exercised on such questionable grounds. With his new expectations he continues to blend his old ideas. He feasts his imagination with the prospect of a more fruitful harvest on an unknown, and perhaps an unbroken soil—as if human nature were not pretty much the same everywhere; as if the laborer were accountable for the abundance of his crop, and not solely for his own assiduity—as if actual duty faithfully performed, even in that circumscribed sphere in which God has cast our lot, is not more acceptable to him, than theories of the most extensive good, than distant speculations and improbable projects, for the benefit even of a whole district; while, in the indulgence of those airy schemes, our own specific and appointed work lies neglected, or is performed without energy and without attention.

Self-love so naturally infatuates the judgment, that it is no paradox to assert that we look too far, and yet do not look far enough. We look too far when passing over the
actual duties of the immediate scene, we form long connected trains of future projects, and indulge our thoughts in such as are most remote, and perhaps least probable. And we do not look far enough when the prospective mind does not shoot beyond all these little earthly distances, to that state, falsely called remote, whither all our steps are not the less tending, because our eyes are confined to the home scenes. But while the precariousness of our duration ought to set limits to our designs, it should furnish incitements to our application. Distant projects are too apt to slacken present industry, while the magnitude of schemes, probably impracticable, may render our actual exertions cold and sluggish.

Let it be observed that we would be the last to censure any of those fair and honorable means of improving his condition, which every man, be he worldly or religious, owes to himself, and to his family. Saints as well as sinners have in common, what a great genius calls, "certain inconvenient appetites of eating and drinking," which while we are in the body must be complied with. It would be a great hardship on good men, to be denied any innocent means of fair gratification. It would be a peculiar injustice that the most diligent laborer should be esteemed the least worthy of his hire, the least fit to rise in his profession.

The more serious clergyman has also the same warm affection for his children with his less scrupulous brother, and consequently the same laudable desire for their comfortable establishment; only in his plans for their advancement he should neither entertain ambitious views, nor prosecute any views, even the best, by methods not consonant to the strictness of his avowed principles. Professing to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," he ought to be more exempt from an over-anxious solicitude than those who profess it less zealously. Avowing a more determined confidence that all other things will, as far as they are absolutely necessary, "be added unto him," he should, as it is obvious he commonly does, manifest practically, a more implicit trust, confiding in that gracious and cheering promise, that promise expressed both negatively and positively, as if to comfort by a double confirmation, that God who is "both his light and defence, who will give grace and worship, will also withhold no good thing from them that live a godly life."

It is one of the trials of faith appended to the sacred office,
that its ministers, like the father of the faithful, are liable to go out, "not knowing whither they go;" and this not only at their first entrance into their profession, but throughout life; an inconvenience to which no other profession is necessarily liable; a trial which is not perhaps fairly estimated.

This remark will naturally raise a laugh among those who at once hold the function in contempt, deride its ministers, and think their well-earned remuneration lavishly and even unnecessarily bestowed. They will probably exclaim with as much complacency in their ridicule, as if it were really the test of truth—"A great cause of commiseration truly, to be transferred from a starving curacy to a plentiful benefice, or from the vulgar society of a country parish, to be a stalled theologian in an opulent town!"

We are far from estimating at a low rate the exchange from a state of uncertainty to a state of independence, from a life of penury to comfort, or from a barely decent to an affluent provision.—But does the ironical remarker rate the feelings and affections of the heart at nothing? If he insists that money is that chief good of which ancient philosophy says so much, we beg leave to insist that it is not the only good. We are above the affectation of pretending to condole with any man on his exaltation, but there are feelings which a man of acute sensibility, rendered more acute by an elegant education, values more intimately than silver or gold.

Is it absolutely nothing to resign his local comforts, to break up his local attachments, to have new connections to form, and that frequently at an advanced period of life? Connections, perhaps, less valuable than those he is quitting? Is it nothing for a faithful minister to be separated from an affectionate people, a people not only whose friendship but whose progress has constituted his happiness here, as it will make his joy and crown of rejoicing hereafter?

Men of delicate minds estimate things by their affections as well as by their circumstances; to a man of a certain cast of character, a change, however advantageous, may be rather an exile than a promotion. While he gratefully accepts the good, he receives it with an edifying acknowledgment of the imperfection of the best human things. These considerations we confess add the additional feelings of kindness to their persons, and of sympathy with their vicissitudes, to our respect and veneration for their holy office.
To themselves, however, the precarious tenure of their situation presents an instructive emblem of the uncertain condition of human life, of the transitory nature of the world itself. Their liableness to a sudden removal gives them the advantage of being more especially reminded of the necessity and duty of keeping in a continual posture of preparation, having "their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand." They have also the same promises which supported the Israelites in the desert.—The same assurance which cheered Abraham, may still cheer the true servants of God under all difficulties.—"Fear not—I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward."

But there are perils on the right hand and on the left. It is not among the least, that though a pious clergyman may at first have tasted with trembling caution of the delicious cup of applause, he may gradually grow, as thirst is increased by indulgence, to drink too deeply of the enchanted chalice. The dangers arising from any thing that is good, are formidable, because unsuspected. And such are the perils of popularity that we will venture to say that the victorious general, who has conquered a kingdom, or the sagacious statesman who has preserved it, is almost in less danger of being spoiled by acclamation than the popular preacher; because their danger is likely to happen but once, his is perpetual. Theirs is only on a day of triumph, his day of triumph occurs every week; we mean the admiration he excites. Every fresh success ought to be a fresh motive to humiliation; he who feels his danger will vigilantly guard against swallowing too greedily the indiscriminate, and often undistinguishing plaudits which his doctrines or his manner, his talents or his voice, may equally procure for him.

If he be not prudent as well as pious, he may be brought to humor his audience, and his audience to flatter him with a dangerous emulation, till they will scarcely endure truth itself from any other lips. Nay, he may imperceptibly be led not to be always satisfied with the attention and improvement of his hearers, unless the attention be sweetened by flattery, and the improvement followed by exclusive attachment.

The spirit of exclusive fondness generates a spirit of controversy. Some of the followers will rather improve in casuistry than in Christianity. They will be more busied in opposing Paul to Apollos, than looking unto "Jesus,
the author and finisher of their faith;" than in bringing forth fruits meet for repentance. Religious gossip may assume the place of religion itself. A party spirit is thus generated, and Christianity may begin to be considered as a thing to be discussed and disputed, to be heard and talked about, rather than as the productive principle of virtuous conduct.*

We owe, indeed, lively gratitude and affectionate attachment to the minister who has faithfully labored for our edification; but the author has sometimes noticed a manner adopted by some injudicious adherents, especially of her own sex, which seems rather to erect their favorite into the head of a sect, than to reverence him as the pastor of a flock. This mode of evincing an attachment, amiable in itself, is doubtless as distressing to the delicacy of the minister as it is unfavorable to religion, to which it is apt to give an air of party.

May we be allowed to animadvert more immediately on the cause of declension in piety in some persons who formerly exhibited evident marks of that seriousness in their lives which they continue to inculcate from the pulpit. If such has been sometimes (we hope it has been very rarely) the case, may it not be partly ascribed to an unhappy notion that the same exactness in his private devotion, the same watchfulness in his daily conduct, is not equally necessary in the advanced progress as in the first stages of a religious course? He does not desist from warning his hearers of the continual necessity of these things, but is he not in some danger of not applying the necessity to himself? May he not begin to rest satisfied with the inculcation without the practice? It is not probable indeed that he goes so far as to establish himself as an exempt case, but he slides from indolence into the exemption, as if its avoidance were not so necessary for him as for others.

Even the very sacredness of his profession is not without a snare. He may repeat the holy offices so often that he may be in danger on the one hand, of sinking into the notion that it is a mere profession, or, on the other, of so resting in it as to make it supersede the necessity of that strict personal religion with which he set out: he may at least be satisfied with the occasional, without the uniform practice. There is a danger—we advert only to its possi-

* This polemic tattle is of a totally different character from that species of religious conversation recommended in the preceding chapter.
bility—that his very exactness in the public exercise of his function may lead to a little justification of his remissness in secret duties. His zealous exposition of the Scriptures to others may satisfy him, though it does not always lead to a practical application of them to himself.

But God, by requiring exemplary diligence in the devotion of his appointed servants, would keep up in their minds a daily sense of their dependence on him. If he does not continually teach by his spirit those who teach others, they have little reason to expect success, and that spirit will not be given where it is not sought, or, which is an awful consideration, may be withdrawn, where it had been given and not improved as it might have been.

Should this unhappily ever be the case, it would almost reduce the minister of Christ to a mere engine, a vehicle through which knowledge was barely to pass, like the ancient oracles who had nothing to do with the information but to convey it. Perhaps the public success of the best men has been, under God, principally owing to this, that their faithful ministration in the temple has been uniformly preceded and followed by petitions in the closet; that the truths implanted in the one have chiefly flourished from having been watered by the tears and nourished by the prayers of the other.

We will hazard but one more observation on this dangerous and delicate subject; in this superficial treatment of which it is the thing in the world the most remote from the writer's wish to give the slightest offence to any pious member of an order which possesses her highest veneration.—If the indefatigable laborer in his great master's vineyard, has, as must often be the case, the mortification of finding that his labors have failed of producing their desired effect, in some instance, where his warmest hopes had been excited;—if he feels that he has not benefited others as he had earnestly desired, this is precisely the moment to benefit himself, and is perhaps permitted for that very end. Where his usefulness has been obviously great, the true Christian will be humbled by the recollection that he is only an instrument. Where it has been less, the defeat of his hopes offers the best occasion, which he will not fail to use, for improving his humility. Thus he may always be assured that good has been done somewhere, so that in any case his labor will not have been vain in the Lord.
It is one of the most important ends of cultivating that self-knowledge which we have elsewhere recommended, to discover what is the real bent of our mind, and which are the strongest tendencies of our character; to discover where our disposition requires restraint, and where we may be safely trusted with some liberty of indulgence. If the temper be fervid, and that fervor be happily directed to religion, the most consummate prudence will be requisite to restrain its excesses without freezing its energies.

If, on the contrary, timidity and diffidence be the natural propensity, we shall be in danger of falling into coldness and inactivity with regard to ourselves, and into too unresisting a compliance with the requisitions, or too easy a conformity with the habits of others. It will therefore be an evident proof of Christian self-government, when the man of too ardent zeal restrains its outward expression where it would be unseasonable or unsafe; while it will evince the same Christian self-denial in the fearful and diffident character, to burst the fetters of timidity, where duty requires a holy boldness; and when he is called upon to lose all lesser fears in the fear of God.

It will then be one of the first objects of a Christian to get his understanding and his conscience thoroughly enlightened; to take an exact survey not only of the whole comprehensive scheme of Christianity, but of his own character; to discover, in order to correct, the defects in his judgment, and to ascertain the deficiencies even of his best qualities. Through ignorance in these respects, though he may really be following up some good tendency, though he is even persuaded that he is not wrong either in his motive or his object, he may yet be wrong in the measure, wrong in the mode, wrong in the application, though right in the principle. He must therefore watch with a suspicious eye over his better qualities, and guard his very virtues from deviation and excess.

His zeal, that indispensable ingredient in the composition of a great character, that quality, without which no great eminence either secular or religious has ever been attained; which is essential to the acquisition of excellence
in arts and arms, in learning and piety; that principle without which no man will be able to reach the perfection of his nature, or to animate others to aim at that perfection, will yet hardly fail to mislead the animated Christian, if his knowledge of what is right and just, if his judgment in the application of that knowledge do not keep pace with the principle itself.

Zeal, indeed, is not so much an individual virtue, as the principle which gives life and coloring, as the spirit which gives grace and benignity, as the temper which gives warmth and energy to every other. It is that feeling which exalts the relish of every duty, and sheds a lustre on the practice of every virtue; which, embellishing every image of the mind with its glowing tints, animates every quality of the heart with its invigorating motion. It may be said of zeal among the virtues, as of memory among the faculties, that though it singly never made a great man, yet no man has ever made himself conspicuously great where it has been wanting.

Many things however must concur before we can be allowed to determine whether zeal be really a virtue or a vice. Those who are contending for the one or the other, will be in the situation of the two knights, who meeting on a cross road, were on the point of fighting about the color of a cross which was suspended between them. One insisted it was gold; the other maintained it was silver. The duel was prevented by the interference of a passenger, who desired them to change their positions. Both crossed over to the opposite side, found the cross was gold on one side, and silver on the other. Each acknowledged his opponent to be right.

It may be disputed whether fire be a good or an evil. The man who feels himself cheered by its kindly warmth, is assured that it is a benefit, but he whose house it has just burnt down will give another verdict. Not only the cause, therefore, in which zeal is exerted must be good, but the principle itself must be under due regulation: or, like the rapidity of the traveller who gets into a wrong road, it will only carry him so much the further out of his way; or if he be in the right road, it will, through inattention, carry him involuntarily beyond his destined point. That degree of motion is equally misleading, which detains us short of our end, or which pushes us beyond it.

The apostle suggests a useful precaution by expressly asserting that it is "in a good cause," that we "must be
zealously affected," which implies this further truth, that where the cause is not good, the mischief is proportioned to the zeal. But lest we should carry our limitations of the quality to any restriction of the seasons for exercising it, he takes care to animate us to its perpetual exercise, by adding that we must be always so affected.

If the injustice, the intolerance and persecution, with which a misguided zeal has so often afflicted the church of Christ, in its more early periods, be lamented as a deplorable evil, yet the over-ruuling wisdom of Providence educeed good from evil, made the very calamities which false zeal occasioned, the instruments of producing that true and lively zeal to which we owe the glorious band of martyrs and confessors, those brightest ornaments of the best periods of the church. This effect, though a clear vindication of that divine goodness which suffers evil, is no apology for him who perpetrates it.

It is curious to observe the contrary operations of true and false zeal, which though apparently only different modifications of the same quality, are, when brought into contact, repugnant, and even destructive to each other. There is no attribute of the human mind where the different effects of the same principle have such a total opposition: for is it not obvious that the same principle under another direction, which actuates the tyrant in dragging the martyr to the stake, enables the martyr to embrace it?

As a striking proof that the necessity for caution is not imaginary, it has been observed that the Holy Scriptures record more instances of a bad zeal than of a good one. This furnishes the most authoritative argument for regulating this impetuous principle, and for governing it by all those restrictions which a feeling so calculated for good and so capable of evil demands.

It was zeal, but of a blind and furious character, which produced the massacre on the day of St. Bartholomew—a day to which the mournful strains of Job have been so well applied.—"Let that day perish. Let it not be joined to the days of the year. Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it."—It was a zeal the most bloody, combined with a perfidy the most detestable, which inflamed the execrable Florentine,* when, having on this occasion invited so many illustrious Protestants to Paris under the alluring mask of a public festivity, she contrived to involve her guest, the pious queen of Navarre, and the venerable Co-

* Catherine de Medici.
The crown and consummation of their crime.

The blackest hypocrisy was made use of to sanctify the foulest murder. The iniquity could not be complete without solemnly thanking God for its success. The pope and cardinals proceeded to St. Mark’s Church, where they praised the Almighty for so great a blessing conferred on the See of Rome, and the Christian world. A solemn Jubilee completed the preposterous mummeries.—This zeal of devotion was as much worse than even the zeal of murder, as thanking God for enabling us to commit a sin is worse than the commission itself. A wicked piety is still more disgusting than a wicked act. God is less offended by the sin itself than by the thank-offering of its perpetrators. It looks like a black attempt to involve the Creator in the crime.*

It was this exterminating zeal which made the fourteenth Louis, bad in the profligacy of his youth, worse in the superstition of his age, revoke the tolerating edict which might have drawn down a blessing on his kingdom.—One species of crime was called on, in his days of blind devotion, to expiate another committed in his days of mad ambition. But the expiation was even more intolerable than the offence. The havoc made by the sword of civil persecution was a miserable atonement for the blood which unjust aggression had shed in foreign wars.

It was this impious and cruel zeal, which inspired the monk Dominic in erecting the most infernal tribunal which ever inventive bigotry projected to dishonor the Christian name, and with which pertinacious barbarity has continued for above six centuries, to afflict the human race.

For a complete contrast to this pernicious zeal we need not, blessed be God, travel back into remote history, nor abroad into distant realms. This happy land of civil and religious liberty can furnish a countless catalogue of instances of a pure, a wise, and a well directed zeal. Not

* See Thuanus, for a most affecting and exact account of this direful massacre.
to swell the list, we will only mention that it has in our own age, produced the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, the British and Foreign Bible Society, and the Abolition of the African Slave Trade.—Three as noble, and which will, we trust, be as lasting monuments as ever national virtue erected to true piety. These are institutions which bear the genuine stamp of Christianity, not originating in party, founded in disinterestedness, and comprehending the best interests of almost the whole habitable globe—"without partiality and without hypocrisy."

Why we hear so much in praise of zeal from a certain class of religious characters, is partly owing to their having taken up a notion that its required exertions relate to the care of other people's salvation rather than to their own; and indeed the casual prying into a neighbor's house, though much more entertaining, is not near so troublesome as the constant inspection of one's own. It is observable that the outcry against zeal among the irreligious is raised on nearly the same ground, as the clamor in its favor by these professors of religion. The former suspect that the zeal of the religionist evaporates in censuring their impiety, and in eagerness for their conversion, instead of being directed to themselves. This supposed anxiety they resent, and give a practical proof of their resentment by resolving not to profit by it.

Two very erroneous opinions exist, respecting zeal. It is commonly supposed to indicate a want of charity, and the two principles are accused of maintaining separate interests. This is so far from being the case, that charity is the firm associate of that zeal of which it is suspected to be the enemy. Indeed, this is so infallible a criterion by which to try its sincerity, that we should be apt to suspect the legitimacy of the zeal which is unaccompanied by this fair ally.

Another opinion equally erroneous is not a little prevalent—that where there is much zeal there is little or no prudence. Now a sound and sober zeal is not such an idiot as to neglect to provide for its own success; and would that success be provided for, without employing for its accomplishment, every precaution which prudence can suggest? True zeal therefore will be as discreet as it is fervent, well knowing that its warmest efforts will be neither effectual, nor lasting, without those provisions which discretion alone can make. No quality is ever possessed in perfection where its opposite is wanting; zeal is not
Christian fervor, but animal heat, if not associated with charity and prudence.

Zeal indeed, like other good things, is frequently calumniated because it is not understood; and it may sometimes deserve censure, as being the effervescence of that weak but well meaning mind which will defeat the efforts not only of this, but of every other good propensity.

That most valuable faculty therefore of intellectual man, the judgment, the enlightened, impartial, unbiased judgment, must be kept in perpetual activity, not only in order to ascertain that the cause be good, but to determine also the degree of its importance in any given case, that we may not blindly assign an undue value to an inferior good: for want of this discrimination we may be fighting a windmill, when we fancy we are attacking a fort. We must prove not only whether the thing contended for be right, but whether it be essential; whether in our eagerness to attain this subordinate good we may not be sacrificing, or neglecting, things of more real consequence. Whether the value we assign to it may not be even imaginary.

Above all, we should examine whether we do not contend for it chiefly because it happens to fall in with our own humor, or our own party, more than on account of its intrinsic worth; whether we do not wish to distinguish ourselves by our pertinacity, and to append ourselves to the party rather than to the principle; and thus, as popularity is often gained by the worst part of a man's character, whether we do not principally persist from the hope of becoming popular. The favorite adage that le jeu ne vaut pas la chandelle might serve as an appropriate motto to one half of the contentions which divide and distract the world.

This zeal, hotly exercised for mere circumstances, for ceremonies different in themselves, for distinctions rather than differences, has unhappily assisted in causing irreparable separations and dissensions in the Christian world, even where the champions on both sides were great and good men. Many of the points which have been the sources of altercation were not worth insisting upon, where the opponents agreed in the grand fundamentals of faith and practice.

But to consider zeal as a general question, as a thing of every day experience.—He whose piety is most sincere will be likely to be the most zealous. But though zeal is an indication, and even a concomitant of sincerity, a burning zeal is sometimes seen where the sincerity is somewhat questionable.
For where zeal is generated by ignorance it is commonly fostered by self-will. That which we have embraced through false judgment we maintain through false honor. Pride is generally called in to nurse the offspring of error. It is from this confederacy that we frequently see those who are perversely zealous for points which can add nothing to the cause of Christian truth, whether they are rejected or retained, cold and indifferent about the great things which involve the salvation of man.

Though all momentous truths, all indispensable duties, are, in the luminous volume of inspiration, made so obvious that those may read who run, the contested matters are not only so comparatively little as to be by no means worthy of the heat they excite, but are rendered so doubtful, not in themselves, but by the opposite systems built on them, that he who fights for them is not always sure whether he be right or not; and if he carry his point he can make no moral use of his victory. This indeed is not his concern. It is enough that he has conquered. The importance of the object having never depended on its worth, but on the opinion of his right to maintain that worth.

The Gospel assigns very different degrees of importance to allowed practices and commanded duties. It by no means censures those who were rigorous in their payment of the most inconsiderable tithes; but seeing this duty was not only put in competition with, but preferred before, the most important duties, even judgment, mercy, and faith, the flagrant hypocrisy was pointedly censured by meekness itself.

This opposition of a scrupulous exactness in paying the petty demand on three paltry herbs, to the neglect of the three cardinal Christian virtues, exhibits as complete and instructive a specimen of that frivolous and false zeal, which, evaporating in trifles, wholly overlooks those grand points on which hangs eternal life, as can be conceived.

This passage serves to corroborate a striking fact, that there is scarcely in Scripture any precept enforced which has not some actual exemplification attached to it. The historical parts of the Bible, therefore, are of inestimable value, were it only on this single ground, that the appended truths and principles, so abundantly scattered through them, are in general so happily illustrated by them. They are not dry aphorisms and cold propositions, which stand singly, and disconnected, but truths suggested by the
event, but precepts growing out of the occasion. The re-
collection of the principles recalls to the mind the instruc-
tive story which they enrich, while the remembrance of
the circumstance impresses the sentiment upon the heart.
Thus the doctrine, like a precious gem, is at once pre-
served and embellished by the narrative being made a
frame in which to enshrine it.

True zeal will first exercise itself in earnest desires, in
increasing ardor to obtain higher degrees of illumination
in our own minds; in fervent prayer that this growing light
may operate to the improvement of our practice, that the
influences of divine grace may become more outwardly
perceptible by the increasing correctness of our habits;
that every holy affection may be followed by its correspon-
dent act, whether of obedience, or of resignation, of doing,
or of suffering.

But the effects of a genuine and enlightened zeal will
not stop here. It will be visible in our discourse with those
to whom we may have a probability of being useful. But
though we should not confine the exercise of our zeal to
our conversation, nor our attention to the opinions and
practices of others, yet this, when not done with a bustling
kind of interference, and offensive forwardness, is proper
and useful. It is indeed a natural effect of zeal to appear
where it exists, as a fire which really burns will not be pre-
vented from emitting both light and heat, yet we should
labor principally to keep up in our own minds the pious
feelings which religion has excited there. The brightest
flame will decay, if no means are used to keep it alive.
Pure zeal will cherish every holy affection, and by increas-
ing every pious disposition will animate us to every duty.
It will add new force to our hatred of sin, fresh contrition
to our repentance, additional vigor to our resolutions, and
will impart augmented energy to every virtue. It will give
life to our devotions, and spirit to all our actions.

When a true zeal has fixed these right affections in our
own hearts, the same principle will, as we have already
observed, make us earnest to excite them in others. No
good man wishes to go to heaven alone, and none ever
wished others to go thither without earnestly endeavoring
to awaken right affections in them. That will be a false
zeal which does not begin with the regulation of our own
hearts. That will be an illiberal zeal which stops where
it begins. A true zeal will extend itself through the whole
sphere of its possessor's influence. Christian zeal, like
Christian charity, will begin at home, but neither the one nor the other must end there.

But that we must not confine our zeal to mere conversation, is not only implied, but expressed in Scripture. The apostle does not exhort us to be zealous only of good words, but of good works. True zeal ever produces true benevolence. It would extend the blessings which we ourselves enjoy, to the whole human race. It will consequently stir us up to exert all our influence to the extension of religion, to the advancement of every well concerted and well conducted plan, calculated to enlarge the limits of human happiness, and more especially to promote the eternal interests of human kind.

But if we do not first strenuously labor for our own illumination, how shall we presume to enlighten others? It is a dangerous presumption, to busy ourselves in improving others, before we have diligently sought our own improvement. Yet it is a vanity not uncommon, that the first feelings, be they true or false, which resemble devotion, the first faint ray of knowledge which has imperfectly dawned, excites in certain raw minds an eager impatience to communicate to others what they themselves have not yet attained. Hence the novel swarms of uninstructed instructors, of teachers who have had no time to learn. The act previous to the imparting knowledge should seem to be that of acquiring it. Nothing would so effectually check an irregular, and improve a temperate zeal, as the personal discipline, the self-acquaintance which we have so repeatedly recommended.

True Christian zeal will always be known by its distinguishing and inseparable properties. It will be warm indeed, not from temperament but principle.—It will be humble, or it will not be Christian zeal.—It will restrain its impetuosity, that it may the more effectually promote its object.—It will be temperate, softening what is strong in the act, by gentleness in the manner.—It will be tolerating, willing to grant what it would itself desire.—It will be forbearing, in the hope that the offence it censures may be an occasional failing, and not a habit of the mind.—It will be candid, making a tender allowance for those imperfections which beings, fallible themselves, ought to expect from human infirmity.—It will be reasonable, employing fair argument and affectionate remonstrance, instead of irritating by the adoption of violence, instead of mortifying by the assumption of superiority.
He, who in private society allows himself in violent anger, or unhallowed bitterness, or acrimonious railing, in reprehending the faults of another, might, did his power keep pace with his inclination, have recourse to other weapons. He would probably banish and burn, confiscate and imprison, and think then as he thinks now, that he is doing God service.

If there be any quality which demands a clearer sight, a tighter rein, a stricter watchfulness than another, zeal is that quality. The heart where it is wanting has no elevation; where it is not guarded, no security. The prudence with which it is exercised is the surest evidence of its integrity; for if intemperate, it not only raises enemies to ourselves, but to God. It augments the natural enmity to religion, instead of increasing her friends.

But if tempered by charity, if blended with benevolence, if sweetened by kindness, if evinced to be honest by its influence on your own conduct, and gentle by its effect on your manners, it may lead your irreligious acquaintance to inquire more closely in what consists the distinction between them and you. You will already, by this mildness, have won their affections. Your next step may be to gain over their judgment. They may be led to examine what solid grounds of difference subsist between you and them. What substantial reason you have for not going their lengths. What sound argument they can offer for not going yours.

But it may possibly be asked, after all, where do we perceive any symptoms of this inflammatory distemper? Should not the prevalence, or, at least, the existence of a disease be ascertained, previous to the application of the remedy? That it exists is sufficiently obvious, though it must be confessed, that among the higher ranks it has not hitherto spread very widely; nor is its progress likely to be very alarming, or its effects very malignant. It is to be lamented that in every rank, indeed, coldness and indifference, carelessness and neglect, are the reigning epidemics. These are diseases far more difficult of cure, diseases not more dangerous to the patient than distressing to the physician, who generally finds it more difficult to raise a sluggish habit than to lower an occasional heat. The imprudently zealous man, if he be sincere, may, by a discreet regimen, be brought to a state of complete sanity; but to rouse from a state of morbid indifference; to brace from a total relaxation of the system, must be the immediate work.
of the great physician of souls; of him who can effect even this, by his Spirit accompanying this powerful word, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

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**CHAP. XVIII.**

*Insensibility to Eternal Things.*

*Insensibility* to eternal things, in beings who are standing on the brink of eternity, is a madness which would be reckoned among prodigies, if it were not so common. It would be altogether incredible, if the numberless instances we have of it, were only related, and not witnessed, were only heard of; and not experienced.

If we had a certain prospect of a great estate, and a splendid mansion which we knew must be ours in a few days; and not only ours as a bequest, but an inheritance; not only as a possession, but a perpetuity; if, in the mean time, we rented, on a precarious lease, a paltry cottage in bad repair, ready to fall, and from which we knew we must at all events soon be turned out, depending on the proprietor's will, whether the ejectment might not be the next minute; would it argue wisdom or even common sense, totally to overlook our near and noble reversion, and to be so fondly attached to our falling tenement, as to spend great part of our time and thoughts in supporting its ruins by props, and concealing its decays by decorations? To be so absorbed in the little sordid pleasures of this frail abode, as not even to cultivate a taste for the delights of the mansion, where such treasures are laid up for us, and on the possession of which we fully reckon in spite of our neglect; this is an excess of inconsideration, which must be seen to be credited.

It is a striking fact, that the acknowledged uncertainty of life drives worldly men to make sure of every thing depending on it, except their eternal concerns. It leads them to be regular in their accounts, and exact in their bargains. They are afraid of risking ever so little property, on so precarious a tenure as life, without insuring a reversion. There are even some who speculate on the uncertainty of
life as a trade. Strange, that this accurate calculation of
the duration of life should not involve a serious attention
to its end! Strange, that the critical annuitant should to-
tally overlook his perpetuity! Strange, that in the prudent
care not to risk a fraction of property, equal care should
not be taken, not to risk eternal salvation!
We are not supposing flagitious characters, remarkable
for any thing which the world calls wicked; we are not
supposing their wealth obtained by injustice, or increased
by oppression. We are only supposing a soul drawn aside
from God, by the alluring baits of a world, which, like the
treacherous lover of Atalanta, causes him to lose the victory
by throwing golden apples in his way. The shining baits
are obtained, but the race is lost!
To worldly men of a graver cast, business may be as
formidable an enemy as pleasure is to those of a lighter
turn: business has so sober an air that it looks like virtue,
and virtuous it certainly is, when carried on in a proper
spirit, with due moderation, and in the fear of God. To
have a lawful employment, and to pursue it with diligence,
is not only right and honorable in itself, but is one of the
best preservatives from temptation.*
When a man pleads in his favor, the diligence business
demands, the self-denying practices it imposes, the pa-
tience, the regularity, the industry indispensable to its suc-
cess, when he argues that these are habits of virtue, that
they are a daily discipline to the moral man, and that the
world could not subsist without business, he argues justly:
but when he forgets his interests in the eternal world, when
he neglects to lay up a treasure in heaven, in order that
he may augment a store which he does not want, and, per-
haps, does not intend to use, or uses to purposes merely
secular, he is a bad calculator of the relative value of things.
Business has an honorable aspect as being opposed to
idleness, the most hopeless offspring of the whole progeny
of sin. The man of business comparing himself with the
man of dissipation, feels a fair and natural consciousness
of his own value, and of the superiority of his own pursuits.
But it is by comparison that we deceive ourselves to our
ruin. Business, whether professional, commercial, or po-
itical, endangers minds of a better cast, minds which look

* That accurate judge of human life, Dr. Johnson, has often been heard,
by the writer of these pages, to observe, that it was the greatest misfortune
which could befall a man, to have been bred to no profession, and patheti-
cally to regret that this misfortune was his own.
down on pleasure as beneath a thinking being. But if business absorb the affections, if it swallow up time, to the neglect of eternity; if it generate a worldly spirit; if it cherish covetousness; if it engage the mind in long views, and ambitious pursuits, it may be as dangerous, as its more inconsiderate and frivolous rival. The grand evil of both lies in the alienation of the heart from God. Nay, in one respect, the danger is greater to him who is the best employed. The man of pleasure, however thoughtless, can never make himself believe that he is doing right. The man plunged in the serious bustle of business, cannot easily persuade himself that he may be doing wrong.

Commutation, compensation, and substitution, are the grand engines which worldly religion incessantly keeps in play. Hers is a life of barter, a state of spiritual traffic, so much indulgence for so many good works. The implication is, "we have a rigorous master," and it is but fair to indemnify ourselves for the severity of his requisitions; just as an overworked servant steals a holiday. "These persons," says an eminent writer,* "maintain a meum and tuum with heaven itself." They set bounds to God's prerogative, lest it should too much encroach on man's privilege.

We have elsewhere observed, that if we invite people to embrace religion on the mere mercenary ground of present pleasure, they will desert it as soon as they find themselves disappointed. Men are too ready to clamor for the pleasures of piety, before they have, I dare not say, entitled themselves to them, but put themselves into the way of receiving them. We should be angry at that servant, who made the receiving of his wages a preliminary to the performance of his work. This is not meant to establish the merit of works, but the necessity of our seeking that transforming and purifying change which characterizes the real Christian; instead of complaining that we do not possess those consolations, which can be consequent only on such a mutation of the mind.

But if men consider this world on the true scripture ground, as a state of probation; if they consider religion as a school for happiness indeed, but of which the consummation is only to be enjoyed in heaven, the Christian hope will support them; the Christian faith will strengthen them. They will serve diligently, wait patiently, love cordially,

*The learned and pious John Smith.
obey faithfully, and be steadfast under all trials, sustained
by the cheering promise held out to him "who endures to
the end." -

There are certain characters who seem to have a graduat-
ed scale of vices. Of this scale they keep clear of the lowest
degrees, and to rise above the highest they are not ambitious,
forgetful that the same principle which operates in the
greater, operates also in the less. A life of incessant grati-
fication does not alarm the conscience, yet it is equally
unfavorable to religion, equally destructive of its principle,
equally opposite to its spirit, with more obvious vices.

These are the habits which, by relaxing the mind and
dissolving the heart, particularly foster indifference to our
spiritual state and insensibility to the things of eternity. A
life of voluptuousness, if it be not a life of actual sin, is a
disqualification for holiness, for happiness, for heaven. It
not only alienates the heart from God, but lays it open to
every temptation to which natural temper may invite, or
incidental circumstances allure. The worst passions lie
dormant in hearts given up to selfish indulgences, always
ready to start into action as occasion calls.

Voluptuousness and irreligion play into each other's
hands: they are reciprocally cause and effect. The loose-
ness of the principle confirms the carelessness of the
conduct, while the negligent conduct in its own vindication
shelters itself under the supposed security of unbelief. The
instance of the rich man in the parable of Lazarus, strik-
ingly illustrates this truth.

Whoever doubts that a life of sensuality is consistent
with the most unfeeling barbarity to the wants and suffer-
ings of others; whoever doubts that boundless expense and
magnificence, the means of procuring which were wrung
from the robbery and murder of a lacerated world, may not
be associated with that robbery and murder,—let him turn
to the gorgeous festivities and unparalleled pageantries of
Versailles and St. Cloud.—There the imperial harlequin,
from acting the deepest and the longest tragedy that
ever drew tears of blood from an audience composed of the
whole civilized globe, by a sudden stroke of his magic
wand, shifts the scene to the most preposterous panto-
mime:—

Where moody madness laughing wild
Amidst severest wo,
gloomily contemplates the incongruous spectacle, sees the
records of the Tyburn Chronicle embellished with the wanton splendors of the Arabian tales; beholds

Perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things;

beholds tyranny with his painted visor of patriotism, and polygamy with her Janus face of political conscience and counterfeit affection, fill the fore ground; while sceptered parasites, and pinchbeck potentates, tricked out with the shining spoils of plundered empires, and decked with the pilfered crowns of deposed and exiled monarchs, fill and empty the changing scene, with "exits and with entrances," as fleeting and unsubstantial as the progeny of Banquo;—beholds inventive but fruitless art, solicitously decorate the ample stage to conceal the stains of blood—stains as indelible as those which the ambitious wife of the irresolute Thane vainly strove to wash from her polluted hands, while in her sleeping delirium she continued to cry,

Still here's the smell of blood;
The perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten it.

But to return to the general question. Let us not inquire whether these unfeeling tempers and selfish habits offend society, and discredit us with the world; but whether they feed our corruptions and put us in a posture unfavorable to all interior improvement; whether they offend God and endanger the soul; whether the gratification of self is the life which the Redeemer taught or lived; whether sensuality is a suitable preparation for that state where God himself, who is a spirit, will constitute all the happiness of spiritual beings.

But these are not the only, perhaps not the greatest dangers. The intellectual vices, the spiritual offences, may destroy the soul without much injuring the credit. These have not, like voluptuousness, their seasons of alternation and repose. Here the principle is in continual operation. Envy has no interval. Ambition never cools. Pride never sleeps. The principle at least is always awake. An intemperate man is sometimes sober, but a proud man is never humble. Where vanity reigns, she reigns always. These interior sins are more difficult of extirpation, they are less easy of detection, more hard to come at; and, as the citadel sometimes holds out after the outworks are taken, these sins of the heart are the latest conquered in the moral warfare.

Here lies the distinction between the worldly and the re-
It is alarm enough for the Christian that he feels any propensities to vice. Against these propensities he watches, strives and prays: and though he is thankful for the victory when he has resisted the temptation, he can feel no elation of heart while conscious of inward dispositions, which nothing but divine grace enables him to keep from breaking out into a flame. He feels that there is no way to obtain the pardon of sin but to leave off sinning: He feels that though repentance is not a Saviour, yet that there can be no salvation where there is no repentance. Above all, he knows that the promise of remission of sin by the death as Christ is the only solid ground of comfort. However correct his present life may be, the weight of past offences would hang so heavy on his conscience, that without the atoning blood of his Redeemer, despair of pardon for the past would leave him hopeless. He would continue to sin, as an extravagant bankrupt, who can get no acquittal, would continue to be extravagant, because no present frugality could redeem his former debts.

It is sometimes pleaded that the labor attached to persons in high public stations, and important employments, by leaving them no time, furnishes a reasonable excuse for the omission of their religious duties. These apologies are never offered for any such neglect in the poor man, though to him every day brings the inevitable return of his twelve hours' labor without intermission and without mitigation.

But surely the more important the station, the higher and wider the sphere of action, the more imperious is the call for religion, not only in the way of example, but even in the way of success; if it be indeed granted that there is such a thing as divine influences, if it be allowed that God has a blessing to bestow. If the ordinary man who has only himself to govern, requires that aid, how urgent is his necessity who has to govern millions? What an awful idea, could we even suppose it realized, that the weight of a nation might rest on the head of him whose heart looks not up for a higher support!

Were we alluding to sovereigns, and not to statesmen, we need not look beyond the throne of Great Britain for the instance of a monarch who has never made the cares attendant on a king an excuse for neglecting his duty to the King of kings.

The politician, the warrior, and the orator, find it peculiarly hard to renounce in themselves that wisdom and strength to which they believe that the rest of the world
are looking up. The man of station or of genius, when in-vited to the self-denying duties of Christianity, as well as he who has "great possessions," goes away "sorrowing."

But to know that they must end, stamps vanity on all the glories of life; to know that they must end soon, stamps infatuation, not only on him who sacrifices his conscience for their acquisition, but on him who, though upright in the discharge of his duties, discharges them without any reference to God.—Would the conqueror or the orator reflect when the "laurel crown is placed on his brow, how soon it will be followed by the cypress wreath," it would lower the delirium of ambition, it would cool the intoxication of prosperity.

There is a general kind of belief in Christianity, prevalent among men of the world, which, by soothing the conscience, prevents self-inquiry. That the holy Scriptures contain the will of God, they do not question; that they contain the best system of morals, they frequently assert: but they do not feel the necessity of acquiring a correct notion of the doctrines those Scriptures involve. The depravity of man, the atonement made by Christ, the assistance of the Holy Spirit—these they consider as the metaphysical part of religion, into which it is not of much importance to enter, and by a species of self-flattery, they satisfy themselves with an idea of acceptableness with their Maker, as a state to be attained without the humility, faith, and newness of life which they require, and which are indeed their proper concomitants.

A man absorbed in a multitude of secular concerns, decent but unawakened, listens, with a kind of respectful insensibility, to the overtures of religion. He considers the church as venerable from her antiquity, and important from her connection with the state. No one is more alive to her political, nor more dead to her spiritual importance. He is anxious for her existence, but indifferent to her doctrines. These he considers as a general matter in which he has no individual concern. He considers religious observances as something decorous but unreal; as a grave custom made respectable by public usage, and long prescription. He admits that the poor who have little to enjoy, and the idle who have little to do, cannot do better than make over to God that time which cannot be turned to a more profitable account. Religion, he thinks, may properly enough employ leisure, and occupy old age. But though both advance towards himself with no impercepti-
ble step, he is still at a loss to determine the precise period when the leisure is sufficient, or the age enough advanced. It recedes as the destined season approaches. He continues to intend moving, but he continues to stand still.

Compare his drowsy sabbaths with the animation of the days of business, you would not think it was the same man. The one are to be got over, the others are enjoyed. He goes from the dull decencies, the shadowy forms, for such they are to him, of public worship, to the solid realities of his worldly concerns, to the cheerful activities of secular life. These he considers as bounden, almost as exclusive duties. The others indeed may not be wrong, but these he is sure are right. The world is his element. Here he breathes freely his native air. Here he is substantially engaged. Here his whole mind is alive, his understanding broad awake, all his energies are in full play; his mind is all alacrity; his faculties are employed, his capacities are filled; here they have an object worthy of their widest expansion. Here his desires and affections are absorbed. The faint impression of the Sunday's sermon fades away, to be as faintly revived on the Sunday following, again to fade in the succeeding week. To the sermon he brings a formal, ceremonious attendance; to the world he brings all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. To the one he resorts in conformity to law and custom; to induce him to resort to the other, he wants no law, no sanction, no invitation, no argument. His will is of the party. His passions are volunteers. The invisible things of heaven are clouded in shadow, are lost in distance. The world is lord of the ascendant. Riches, honors, power, fill his mind with brilliant images. They are present, they are certain, they are tangible. They assume form and bulk. In these therefore he cannot be mistaken; in the others he may. The eagerness of competition, the struggle for superiority, the perturbations of ambition, fill his mind with an emotion, his soul with an agitation, his affections with an interest, which, though very unlike happiness, he yet flatters himself is the road to it. This factitious pleasure, this tumultuous feeling produces at least that negative satisfaction of which he is constantly in search—it keeps him from himself.

Even in circumstances where there is no success to present a very tempting bait, the mere occupation, the crowd of objects, the succession of engagements, the mingling pursuits, the very tumult and hurry have their grati-
cations. The bustle gives false peace by leaving no leisure for reflection. He lays his conscience asleep with the "flatteringunction" of good intentions. He comforts himself with the creditable pretence of want of time, and the vague resolution of giving up to God the dregs of that life, of the vigorous season of which he thinks the world more worthy: Thus commuting with his Maker, life wears away, its close draws near—and even the poor commutation which was promised is not made. The assigned hour of retreat either never arrives, or if it does arrive, sloth and sensuality are resorted to, as the fair reward of a life of labor and anxiety; and whether he dies in the protracted pursuit of wealth, or in the enjoyment of the luxuries it has earned, he dies in the trammels of the world.

If we do not cordially desire to be delivered from the dominion of these worldly tempers, it is because we do not believe in the condemnation annexed to their indulgence. We may indeed believe it as we believe any other general proposition, or any indifferent fact; but not as a truth in which we have a personal concern; not as a danger which has any reference to us. We evince this practical unbelief in the most unequivocal way, by thinking so much more about the most frivolous concern in which we are assured we have an interest, than about this most important of all concerns.

Indifference to eternal things, instead of tranquillizing the mind, as it professes to do, is, when a thoughtful moment occurs, a fresh subject of uneasiness; because it adds to our peril the horror of not knowing it. If shutting our eyes to a danger would prevent it, to shut them would not only be a happiness but a duty; but to barter eternal safety for momentary ease, is a wretched compromise. To produce this delusion, mere inconsideration is as efficient a cause as the most prominent sin. The reason why we do not value eternal things is, because we do not think of them. The mind is so full of what is present, that it has no room to admit a thought of what is to come. Not only we do not give that attention to a never-dying soul which prudent men give to a common transaction, but we do not even think it worth the care which inconsiderate men give to an inconsiderable one. We complain that life is short, and yet throw away the best part of it, only making over to religion that portion which is good for nothing else; life would be long enough if we assigned its best period to its best purpose.
Say not that the requisitions of religion are severe, ask rather if they are necessary. If a thing must absolutely be done, if eternal misery will be incurred by not doing it, it is fruitless to inquire whether it be hard or easy. Inquire only whether it be indispensably necessary, whether it be commanded, whether it be practicable. It is a well known axiom in science, that difficulties are of no weight against demonstrations. The duty on which our eternal state depends, is not a thing to be debated, but done. The duty which is too imperative to be evaded, too important to be neglected, is not to be argued about, but performed. To sin on quietly, because you do not intend to sin always, is to live on a reversion which will probably never be yours.

It is folly to say that religion drives men to despair; when it only teaches them by a salutary fear to avoid destruction. The fear of God differs from all other fear, for it is accompanied with trust, and confidence, and love. "Blessed is the man that feareth alway" is no paradox to him who entertains this holy fear. It sets him above the fear of ordinary troubles. It fills his heart. He is not discomposed with those inferior apprehensions which unsettle the soul and unhinge the peace of worldly men. His mind is occupied with one grand concern, and is therefore less liable to be shaken than little minds which are filled with little things. Can that principle lead to despair which proclaims the mercy of God in Christ Jesus to be greater than all the sins of all the men in the world?

If despair then prevent your return, add not to your list of offences that of doubting of the forgiveness which is sincerely implored. You have already wronged God in his holiness, wrong him not in his mercy. You may offend him more by despairing of his pardon than by all the sins which have made that pardon necessary. Repentance, if one may venture the bold remark, almost disarms God of the power to punish. Hear his style and title as proclaimed by himself,—"The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty"—that is, those who by unrepented guilt exclude themselves from the offered mercy.

If infidelity or indifference, which is practical infidelity, keep you back, yet, as reasonable beings, ask yourselves a few short questions, "for what end was I sent into the world? Is my soul immortal? Am I really placed here in a
state of trial, or is this span my all? Is there an eternal state? If there be, will the use I make of this life decide on my condition in that? I know that there is death, but is there a judgment?

Rest not till you have cleared up, I do not say your own evidences for heaven; — you have much to do before you arrive at that stage—but whether there be any heaven? Ask yourself whether Christianity is not important enough to deserve being inquired into? Whether eternal life is not too valuable to be entirely overlooked? Whether eternal destruction, if a reality, is not worth avoiding? — If you make these interrogations sincerely, you will make them practically. — They will lead you to examine your own personal interest in these things. Evils which are ruining us for want of attention to them, lessen, from the moment our attention to them begins. True or false, the question is worth settling. Vibrate then no longer between doubt and certainty. If the evidence be inadmissible, reject it. But if you can once ascertain these cardinal points, then throw away your time if you can, then trifle with eternity if you dare.*

It is one of the striking characters of the Omnipotent that “he is strong and patient.” It is a standing evidence of his patience that “he is provoked every day.” How beautifully do these characters reflect lustre on each other. If he were not strong, his patience would want its distinguishing perfection. If he were not patient, his strength would instantly crush those who provoke him, not sometimes, but often; not every year, but “every day.”

Oh you, who have a long space given you for repentance, confess that the forbearance of God, when viewed as coupled with his strength, is his most astonishing attribute! Think of the companions of your early life; — if not your associates in actual vice, if not your confederates in guilty pleasures, yet the sharers of your thoughtless meetings, of your convivial revelry, of your worldly schemes, of your

* An awakening call to public and individual feelings, has been recently made by an observation of an eloquent speaker in the House of Commons. He remarked that himself and the honorable Member for Yorkshire, then sitting on a Committee appointed on occasion of a great national calamity, were the only surviving Members of the Committee on a similar occasion twenty-two years ago! The call is the more alarming, because the mortality did not arise from some extraordinary cause which might not again occur, but was in the common course of human things. Such a proportion of deaths is perpetually taking place, but the very frequency which ought to excite attention prevents it; till it is thus forced on our notice.
ambitious projects,—think how many of them have been cut off, perhaps without warning, probably without repentance. They have been presented to their Judge; their doom, whatever it be, is irreversibly fixed; yours is mercifully suspended. Adore the mercy: embrace the suspension.

Only suppose if they could be permitted to come back to this world, if they could be allowed another period of trial, how would they spend their restored life! How cordial would be their penitence, how intense their devotion, how profound their humility, how holy their actions! Think then that you have still in your power that for which they would give millions of worlds. "Hell," says a pious writer, "is truth seen too late."

In almost every mind there sometimes float indefinite and general purposes of repentance. The operation of these purposes is often repelled by a real though disavowed skepticism. "Because sentence is not executed speedily," they suspect it has never been pronounced. They therefore think they may safely continue to defer their intended but unshapen purpose.—Though they sometimes visit the sick beds of others, though they see how much disease disqualifies for all duties, yet to this period of incapacity, to this moment of disqualification do they continue to defer this tremendously important concern.

What an image of the divine condescension does it convey, that "the goodness of God leadeth to repentance!" It does not barely invite, but it conducts. Every warning is more or less an invitation; every visitation is a lighter stroke to avert a heavier blow. This was the way in which the heathen world understood portents and prodigies, and on this interpretation of them they acted. Any alarming warning, whether rational or superstitious, drove them to their temples, their sacrifices, their expiations. Does our clearer light always carry us farther? Does it in these instances, always carry us as far as natural conscience carried them?

The final period of the worldly man at length arrives; but he will not believe his danger. Even if he fearfully glance round for an intimation of it in every surrounding face, every face, it is too probable, is in a league to deceive him. What a noble opportunity is now offered to the Christian physician to show a kindness as far superior to any he has ever shown, as the concerns of the soul are superior to those of the body! Oh let him not fear prudently
to reveal a truth for which the patient may bless him in eternity! Is it not sometimes to be feared that in the hope of prolonging for a little while the existence of the perishing body, he robs the never-dying soul of its last chance of pardon? Does not the concern for the immortal part united with his care of the afflicted body, bring the medical professor to a nearer imitation than any other supposable situation can do, of that divine Physician who never healed the one without manifesting a tender concern for the other?

But the deceit is short, is fruitless. The amazed spirit is about to dislodge. Who shall speak its terror and dismay? Then he cries out in the bitterness of his soul, "what capacity has a diseased man, what time has a dying man, what disposition has a sinful man to acquire good principles, to unlearn false notions, to renounce bad practices, to establish right habits, to begin to love God, to begin to hate sin? How is the stupendous concern of salvation to be worked out by a mind incompetent to the most ordinary concerns?"

The infinite importance of what he has to do—the goading conviction that it must be done—the utter inability of doing it—the dreadful combination in his mind of both the necessity and incapacity—the despair of crowding the concerns of an age into a moment—the impossibility of beginning a repentance which should have been completed—of setting about a peace which should have been concluded—of suing for a pardon which should have been obtained;—all these complicated concerns—without strength, without time, without hope, with a clouded memory, a disjointed reason, a wounded spirit, undefined terrors, remembered sins, anticipated punishment, an angry God, an accusing conscience, all together, intolerably augment the sufferings of a body which stands in little need of the insupportable burden of a distracted mind to aggravate its torments.

Though we pity the superstitious weakness of the German Emperor in acting over the anticipated solemnities of his own funeral; that eccentric act of penitence of a great but perverted mind; it would be well if we were now and then to represent to our minds while in sound health, the solemn certainties of a dying bed; if we were sometimes to image to ourselves this awful scene, not only as inevitable but as near; if we accustomed ourselves to see things now, as we shall then wish we had seen them. Surely the most sluggish insensibility must be roused by figuring to
itself the rapid approach of death, the nearness of our unalterable doom, our instant transition to that state of unutterable bliss or unimaginable wo to which death will in a moment consign us. Such a mental representation would assist us in dissipating the illusion of the senses; would help to realize what is invisible, and to approximate what we think remote. It would disenchant us from the world, tear off her painted mask, shrink her pleasures into their proper dimensions, her concerns into their real value, her enjoyments into their just compass, her promises into nothing.

Terrible as the evil is, if it must, and that at no distant day, be met, spare not to present it to your imagination; not to lacerate your feelings but to arm your resolution; not to excite unprofitable distress, but to strengthen your faith. If it terrify you at first, draw a little nearer to it every time. Familiarity will abate the terror. If you cannot face the image, how will you encounter the reality?

Let us then figure to ourselves the moment (who can say that moment may not be the next?) when all we cling to shall elude our grasp; when every earthly good shall be to us as if it had never been, except in the remembrance of the use we have made of it; when our eyes shall close upon a world of sense, and open on a world of spirits; when there shall be no relief for the fainting body, and no refuge for the parting soul, except that single refuge to which, perhaps, we have never thought of resorting—that refuge which if we have not despised we have too probably neglected—the everlasting mercies of God in Christ Jesus.

Reader! whoever you are, who have neglected to remember that to die is the end for which you were born, know that you have a personal interest in this scene. Turn not away from it in disdain, however feebly it may have been represented. You may escape any other evil of life, but its end you cannot escape. Defer not then its weightiest concern to its weakest period. Begin not the preparation when you should be completing the work. Delay not the business which demands your best faculties to the period of their debility, probably of their extinction. Leave not the work which requires an age to do, to be done in a moment, a moment too which may not be granted. The alternative is tremendous. The difference is that of being saved or lost. It is no light thing to perish
HAPPY DEATHS.

CHAP. XIX.

Happy Deaths.

Few circumstances contribute more fatally to confirm in worldly men that insensibility to eternal things which was considered in the preceding chapter, than the boastful accounts we sometimes hear of the firm and heroic death-beds of popular but irreligious characters. Many causes contribute to these happy deaths as they are called. The blind are bold, they do not see the precipice they despise.—Or perhaps there is less unwillingness to quit a world which has so often disappointed them, or which they have sucked to the last dregs. They leave life with less reluctance, feeling that they have exhausted all its gratifications.—Or it is a disbelief of the reality of the state of which they are about to enter.—Or it is a desire to be released from excessive pain, a desire naturally felt by those who calculate their gain, rather by what they are escaping from, than by what they are to receive.—Or it is equability of temper, or firmness of nerve, or hardness of mind.—Or it is the arrogant wish to make the last act of life confirm its preceding professions.—Or it is the vanity of perpetuating their philosophic character.—Or if some faint ray of light break in, it is the pride of not retracting the sentiments which from pride they have maintained:—the desire of posthumous renown among their own party; the hope to make their disciples stand firm by their example; the ambition to give their last possible blow to revelation—or perhaps the fear of expressing doubts which might beget a suspicion that their disbelief was not so sturdy as they would have it thought. Above all, may they not, as a punishment for their long neglect of the warning voice of truth, be given up to a strong delusion to believe the lie they have so often propagated, and really to expect to find in death that eternal sleep with which they have affected to quiet their own consciences, and have really weakened the faith of others.

Every new instance is an additional buttress, on which the skeptical school lean for support, and which they produce as a fresh triumph. With equal satisfaction they collect stories of infirmity, depression and want of courage in the dying hour of religious men whom the nature of the
disease, timorousness of spirit, profound humility, the sad remembrance of sin, though long repented of, and forgiven, a deep sense of the awfulness of meeting God in judgment; —whom some or all of these causes may occasion to depart in trembling fear; in whom, though heaviness may endure through the night of death, yet joy cometh in the morning of the resurrection.

It is a maxim of the civil law that definitions are hazardous. And it cannot be denied that various descriptions of persons have hazarded much in their definitions of a happy death. A very able and justly admired writer, who has distinguished himself by the most valuable works on political economy, has recorded, as proofs of the happy death of a no less celebrated contemporary, that he cheerfully amused himself in his last hours with Lucian, a game of whist, and some good honored drollery upon Charon and his boat.

But may we not venture to say, with "one of the people called Christians," * himself a wit and philosopher, though of the school of Christ, that the man who could meet death in such a frame of mind "might smile over Babylon in ruins, esteem the earthquake which destroyed Lisbon an agreeable occurrence, and congratulate the hardened Pharaoh on his overthrow in the Red Sea?"

This eminent historian and philosopher, whose great intellectual powers it is as impossible not to admire, as not to lament their unhappy misapplication, has been eulogized by his friend, as coming nearer than almost any other man, to the perfection of human nature in his life; and has been almost deified for the cool courage and heroic firmness with which he met death. His eloquent panegyrist, with as insidious an innuendo as has ever been thrown out against revealed religion, goes on to observe that, "perhaps it is one of the very worst circumstances against Christianity, that very few of its professors were ever either so moral, so humane, or could so philosophically govern their passions, as the skeptical David Hume."

Yet notwithstanding this rich embalming of so noble a compound of "matter and motion," we must be permitted to doubt one of the two things presented for our admiration; we must either doubt the so much boasted happiness of his death, or the so much extolled humanity of his heart. We must be permitted to suspect the soundness of that benevo-

* The late excellent Bishop Horne. See his Letters to Dr. Adam Smith.
lence which led him to devote his latest hours to prepare, under the label of an Essay on Suicide, a potion for posterity, of so deleterious a quality, that if taken by the patient, under all the circumstances, in which he undertakes to prove it innocent, might have gone near to effect the extinction of the whole human race. For if all rational beings, according to this posthumous prescription, are at liberty to procure their own release from life "under pain or sickness, shame or poverty," how large a portion of the world would be authorized to quit it uncalled! For how many are subject to the two latter grievances; from the two former how few are altogether exempt!*

The energy of that ambition which could concentrate the last efforts of a powerful mind, the last exertions of a spirit greedy of fame, into a project, not only for destroying the souls, but for abridging the lives of his fellow creatures, leaves at a disgraceful distance the inverted thirst of glory of the man, who, to immortalize his own name, set fire to the temple at Ephesus. Such a burning zeal to annihilate the eternal hope of his fellow creatures might be philosophy; but surely to authorize them to curtail their mortal existence, which to the infidel who looks for no other, must be invaluable, was not philanthropy.

But if this death was thought worthy of being blazoned to the public eye in all the warm and glowing colors with which affection decorates panegyrical, the disciples of the same school have been in general anxiously solicitous to produce only the more creditable instances of invincible hardness of heart, while they have labored to cast an impenetrable veil over the closing scene of those among the less inflexible of the fraternity, who have exhibited in their departing moments, any symptoms of doubt, any indications of distrust, respecting the validity of their principles:—Principles which they had long maintained with so much zeal, and disseminated with so much industry.

In spite of the sedulous anxiety of his satellites to conceal the clouded setting of the great luminary of modern infidelity, from which so many minor stars have filled their little urns, and then set up for original lights themselves; in

* Another part of the Essay on Suicide has this passage.—"Whenever pain or sorrow so far overcome my patience, as to make me tired of life, I may conclude that I am recalled from my station in the plainest and most express terms."—And again—"When I fall upon my own sword, I receive my death equally from the hands of the Deity, as if it had proceeded from a lion, a precipice, or a fever."—And again—"Where is the crime of turning a few ounces of blood from their natural channel?"
spite of the pains taken—for we must drop metaphor—to shroud from all eyes, except those of the initiated, the terror and dismay with which the philosopher of Geneva met death, met his summons to appear before that God whose providence he had ridiculed, that Saviour whose character and offices he had vilified,—the secret was betrayed. In spite of the precautions taken by his associates to bury in congenial darkness the agonies which in his last hours contradicted the audacious blasphemies of a laborious life spent in their propagation, at last, like his great instigator, he believed and trembled.

Whatever the sage of Ferney might be in the eyes of journalists, of academicians, of encyclopædists, of the royal author of Berlin, of revolutionists in the egg of his own hatching, of full grown infidels of his own spawning; of a world into which he had been for more than half a century industriously infusing a venom, the effects of which will be long felt, the expiring philosopher was no object of veneration to his nurse.—She could have recorded "a tale to harrow up the soul," the horrors of which were sedulously attempted to be consigned to oblivion. But for this woman and a few other unbribed witnesses, his friends would probably have endeavored to edify the world with this addition to the brilliant catalogue of happy deaths.*

It has been a not uncommon opinion that the works of an able and truly pious Christian, by their happy tendency to awaken the careless and to convince the unbelieving, may, even for ages after the excellent author is entered into his eternal rest, by the accession of new converts which they bring to Christianity, continue to add increasing brightness to the crown of the already glorified saint.—If this be true, how shall imagination presume to conceive, much less how shall language express, what must be expected in the contrary case? How shall we dare turn our thoughts to the

* It is a well attested fact that this woman, after his decease, being sent for to attend another person in dying circumstances, anxiously inquired if the patient was a gentleman, for that she had recently been so dreadfully terrified in witnessing the dying horrors of Mons. de Voltaire, which surpassed all description, that she had resolved never to attend any other person of that sex, unless she could be assured that he was not a philosopher.—Voltaire indeed, as he was deficient in the moral honesty and the other good qualities which obtained for Mr. Hume the affection of his friends, wanted his sincerity. Of all his other vices hypocrisy was the consummation. While he daily dishonored the Redeemer by the invention of unheard of blasphemies; after he had bound himself by a solemn pledge never to rest till he had extirpated his very name from the face of the earth, he was not ashamed to assist regularly at the awful commemoration of his death at the Altar 1
progressive torments which may be ever heaping on the heads of those unhappy men of genius, who having devoted their rare talents to promote vice and infidelity, continue with fatal success to make successive proselytes through successive ages, if their works last so long, and thus accumulate on themselves anguish ever growing, miseries ever multiplying, without hope of any mitigation, without hope of any end.

A more recent instance of the temper and spirit which the college of infidelity exhibits on these occasions, is perhaps less generally known. A person of our own time and country, of high rank and talents, and who ably filled a great public situation, had unhappily, in early life, imbied principles and habits analogous to those of a notoriously profligate society of which he was a member, a society, of which the very appellation it delighted to distinguish itself by, is

Offence and torture to the sober ear.

In the near view of death, at an advanced age, deep remorse and terror took possession of his soul; but he had no friend about him to whom he could communicate the state of his mind, or from whom he could derive either counsel or consolation. One day in the absence of his attendants, he raised his exhausted body on his dying bed, and threw himself on the floor, where he was found in great agony of spirit, with a prayer book in his hand. This detection was at once a subject for ridicule and regret to his colleagues, and he was contemptuously spoken of as a pusillanimous deserter from the good cause. The phrase used by them to express their displeasure at his apostasy is too offensive to find a place here.* Were we called upon to decide between rival horrors, we should feel no hesitation in pronouncing this death a less unhappy one than those to which we have before alluded.

Another well known skeptic, while in perfect health, took measures by a special order, to guard against any intrusion in his last sickness, by which he might, even in the event of delirium, betray any doubtful apprehension that there might be an hereafter; or in any other way be surprised in uttering expressions of terror, and thus exposing the state of his mind, in case any such revolution should take place, which his heart whispered him might possibly happen.

* The writer had this anecdote from an acquaintance of the noble person at the time of his death.
But not only in those happy deaths which close a life of avowed impiety, is there great room for suspicion, but even in cases where without acknowledged infidelity, there has been a careless life; when in such cases we hear of a sudden death-bed revolution, of much seeming contrition, succeeded by extraordinary professions of joy and triumph, we should be very cautious of pronouncing on their real state. Let us rather leave the penitent of a day to that mercy against which he has been sinning through a whole life. These "Clinical Converts" (to borrow a favorite phrase of the eloquent Bishop Taylor) may indeed be true penitents; but how shall we pronounce them to be so? How can we conclude that "they are dead unto sin" unless they be spared to "live unto righteousness?"

Happily we are not called upon to decide. He to whose broad eye the future and the past lie open, as he has been their constant witness, so will he be their unerring judge.*

But the admiring of certain happy deaths, do not even pretend that any such change appeared in the friends of whom they make not so much the panegyrical as the apotheosis. They would even think repentance a derogation from the dignity of their character. They pronounce them to have been good enough as they were; insisting that they have a demand for happiness upon God, if there be any such Being; a claim upon heaven if there be any such place. They are satisfied that their friend, after a life spent "without God in the world," without evidencing any marks of a changed heart, without even affecting any thing like repentance, without intimating that there was any call for it, died pronouncing himself happy.

But nothing is more suspicious than a happy death, where there has neither been religion in the life nor humility in its close, where its course has been without piety, and its termination without repentance.

Others in a still bolder strain, disdaining the posthumous renown to be conferred by survivors, of their having died happily, prudently secure their own fame, and changing

* The primitive church carried their incredulity of the appearances of repentance so far as to require not only years of sorrow for sin, but perseverance in piety, before they would admit offenders to their communion; and as a test of their sincerity, required the uniform practice of those virtues most opposite to their former vices—were this made the criterion now, we should not so often hear such flaming accounts of converts, so exultingly reported, before time has been allowed to try their stability. More especially we should not hear of so many triumphant relations of death-bed converts, in whom the symptoms most frequently be too equivocal to admit the positive decision of human wisdom.
both the tense and the person usual in monumental inscriptions, with prophetic confidence record on their own sepulchral marble, that they shall die not only "happy" but "grateful"—the prescience of philosophy thus assuming as certain, what the humble spirit of Christianity only presumes to hope.

There is another reason to be assigned for the charitable error of indiscriminately consigning our departed acquaintance to certain happiness. Affliction, as it is a tender, so it is a misleading feeling, especially in minds naturally soft, and but slightly tinctured with religion. The death of a friend awakens the kindest feelings of the heart. But by exciting true sorrow, it often excites false charity. Grief naturally softens every fault, love as naturally heightens every virtue. It is right and kind to consign error to oblivion, but not to immortality. Charity indeed we owe to the dead as well as to the living, but not that erroneous charity by which truth is violated, and undeserved commendation lavished on those whom truth could no longer injure. To calumniate the dead is even worse than to violate the rights of sepulture; not to vindicate calumniated worth, when it can no longer vindicate itself, is a crime next to that of attacking it;* but on the dead, charity, though well understood, is often mistakingly exercised.

If we were called upon to collect the greatest quantity of hyperbole—falsehood might be too harsh a term—in the least given time and space, we should do well to search for it in those sacred edifices expressly consecrated to truth. There we should see the ample mass of canonizing kindness which fills their mural decorations, expressed in all those flattering records inscribed by every variety of motive to every variety of claim. In addition to what is dedicated

* What a generous instance of that disinterested attachment which survives the grave of its object, and piously rescues his reputation from the assaults of malignity, was given by the late excellent Bishop Porteus, in his animated defence of Archbishop Seeker! May his own fair fame never stand in need of any such warm vindication, which, however, it could not fail to find in the bosom of every good man!—The fine talents of this lamented prelate, uniformly devoted to the purposes for which God gave them—his life directed to those duties to which his high professional station called him—his Christian graces—those engaging manners which shed a soft lustre on the firm fidelity of his friendships—that kindness which was ever flowing from his heart to his lips—the benignity and candor which distinguished not his conversation only, but his conduct—these, and all those amiable qualities, that gentle temper and correct cheerfulness with which he adorned society, will ever endear his memory to all who knew him intimately; and let his friends remember, that to imitate his virtues will be the best proof of their remembering them.
to real merit by real sorrow, we should hear of tears which were never shed, grief which was never felt, praise which was never earned; we should see what is raised by the decent demands of connection, by tender, but undiscerning friendship, by poetic license, by eloquent gratitude for testamentary favors.

It is an amiable though not a correct feeling in human nature, that, fancying we have not done justice to certain characters during their lives, we run into the error of supposed compensation by over estimating them after their decease.

On account of neighborhood, affinity, long acquaintance, or some pleasing qualities, we may have entertained a kindness for many persons, of whose state however, while they lived, we could not, with the utmost stretch of charity, think favorably. If their sickness has been long and severe, our compassion having been kept by that circumstance in a state of continual excitement; though we lament their death, yet we feel thankful that their suffering is at an end. Forgetting our former opinion, and the course of life on which it was framed, we fall into all the commonplaces of consolation—"God is merciful—we trust that they are at rest—what a happy release they have had!"—Nay, it is well if we do not go so far as to entertain a kind of vague belief that their better qualities joined to their sufferings have, on the whole, ensured their felicity.

Thus at once losing sight of that word of God which cannot lie, of our former regrets on their subject, losing the remembrance of their defective principles, and thoughtless conduct; without any reasonable ground for altering our opinion, any pretence for entertaining a better hope—we assume that they are happy. We reason as if we believed that the suffering of the body had purchased the salvation of the soul, as if it had rendered any doubt almost criminal. We seem to make ourselves easy on the fullest ground imaginable, not because we believe their hearts were changed, but because they are now beyond all possibility of change.

But surely the mere circumstance of death will not have rendered them fit for that heaven for which we before feared they were unfit. Far be it from us, indeed, blind and sinful as we are, to pass sentence upon them, to pass sentence upon any. We dare not venture to pronounce what may have passed between God and their souls, even at the last hour. We know that infinite mercy is not restricted to
times or seasons; to an early or a late repentance; we know not but in that little interval their peace was made, their pardon granted, through the atoning blood, and powerful intercession of their Redeemer. Nor should we too scrupulously pry into the state of others, never, indeed, except to benefit them or ourselves; we should rather imitate the example of Christ, who at once gave an admirable lesson of meekness and charitable judgment, when avoiding an answer which might have led to fruitless discussion, he gave a reproof under the shape of an exhortation.—In reply to the inquiry, "are there few that be saved," he thus checked vain curiosity—"Strive (you) to enter in at the strait gate." On another occasion, in the same spirit, he corrected inquisitiveness, not by an answer, but by an interrogation and a precept—"What is that to thee? Follow thou me."

But where there is strong ground to apprehend that the contrary may have been the case, it is very dangerous to pronounce peremptorily on the safety of the dead. Because if we allow ourselves to be fully persuaded that they are entered upon a state of happiness, it will naturally and fatally tempt us to lower our own standard. If we are ready to conclude that they are now in a state of glory whose principles we believed to be incorrect, whose practice to say the least of it, we know to be negligent, who, without our indulging a censorious or a presumptuous spirit, we thought lived in a state of mind, and a course of habits, not only far from right, but even avowedly inferior to our own; will not this lead to the conclusion, either that we ourselves, standing on so much higher ground, are in a very advanced state of grace, or that a much lower than ours may be a state of safety? And will not such a belief tend to slacken our endeavors, and to lower our tone, both of faith and practice?

By this conclusion we contradict the affecting assertion of a very sublime poet,

For us they sicken and for us they die.

For while we are thus taking and giving false comfort, our friend as to us will have died in vain. Instead of his death having operated as a warning voice, to rouse us to a more animated piety, it will be rather likely to lull us into a dangerous security. If our affection has so blinded our judgment, we shall by the indulgence of a false candor to another, sink into a false peace ourselves.

It will be a wounding circumstance to the feelings of sur-
viving friendship, to see a person of loose habits, whom, though we loved yet we feared to admonish, and that, because we loved him; for whom, though we saw his danger, yet perhaps we neglected to pray; to see him brought to that ultimate and fixed state in which admonition is impossible, in which prayer is not only fruitless, but unlawful.

Another distressing circumstance frequently occurs. We meet with affectionate but irreligious parents, who though kind and perhaps amiable, have neither lived themselves, nor educated their families in Christian principles, nor in habits of Christian piety. A child at the age of maturity dies. Deep is the affliction of the doating parent. The world is a blank. He looks round for comfort where he has been accustomed to look for it, among his friends. He finds it not. He looks up for it where he has not been accustomed to seek it. Neither his heart nor his treasure has been laid up in heaven. Yet a paroxysm, of what may be termed natural devotion, gives to his grief an air of piety. The first cry of anguish is commonly religious.

The lamented object perhaps, through utter ignorance of the awful gulf which was opening to receive him, added to a tranquil temper, might have expired without evidencing any great distress, and his happy death is industriously proclaimed through the neighborhood, and the mourning parents have only to wish that their latter end may be like his. They cheat at once their sorrow and their souls, with the soothing notion that they shall soon meet their beloved child in heaven. Of this they persuade themselves as firmly and as fondly, as if both they and the object of their grief had been living in the way which leads thither. Oh for that unbought treasure, a sincere, a real friend, who might lay hold on the propitious moment! When the heart is softened by sorrow, it might possibly, if ever, be led to its true remedy. This would indeed be a more unequivocal, because more painful act of friendship, than pouring in the lulling opiate of false consolation, which we are too ready to administer, because it saves our own feelings while it soothes, without healing, those of the mourner.

But perhaps the integrity of the friend conquers his timidity. Alas! he is honestly explicit to unattending or to offended ears,—They refuse to hear the voice of the charmer. But if the mourners will not endure the voice of exhortation now, while there is hope, how will they endure the sound of the last trumpet when hope is at an end? If they will not bear the gentle whispers of friendship, how
will they bear the voice of the accusing angel, the terrible sentence of the incensed Judge? If private reproof be intolerable, how will they stand the being made a spectacle to angels and to men, even to the whole assembled universe, to the whole creation of God?

But instead of converting the friendly warning to their eternal benefit, they are probably wholly bent on their own vindication. Still their character is dearer to them than their soul. — "We never," say they, "were any man's enemy." — Yes—you have been the enemy of all to whom you have given a bad example. You have especially been the enemy of your children in whom you have implanted no Christian principles. Still they insist with the prophet that "there is no iniquity in them that can be called iniquity." "We have wronged no one," say they, "we have given to every one his due. We have done our duty." Your first duty was to God. You have robbed your Maker of the service due to him. You have robbed your Redeemer of the souls he died to save. You have robbed your own soul and too probably the souls of those whom you have so wretchedly educated, of eternal happiness.

Thus the flashes of religion which darted in upon their conscience in the first burst of sorrow, too frequently die away; they expire before the grief which kindled them. They resort again to their old resource the world, which if it cannot soon heal their sorrow, at least soon diverts it.

To shut our eyes upon death as an object of terror or of hope, and to consider it only as a release or an extinction, is viewing it under a character which is not its own. But to get rid of the idea at any rate, and then boast that we do not fear the thing we do not think of, is not difficult. Nor is it difficult to think of it without alarm if we do not include its consequences. But to him who frequently repeats, not mechanically but devoutly, "we know that thou shalt "come to be our Judge," death cannot be a matter of indifference.

Another cause of these happy deaths is, that many think salvation a slight thing, that heaven is cheaply obtained, that a merciful God is easily pleased, that we are Christians, and that mercy comes of course to those who have always professed to believe that Christ died to purchase it for them. This notion of God being more merciful than he has any where declared himself to be, instead of inspiring them with more gratitude to him, inspires more confidence in themselves. This corrupt faith generates a corrupt
morality. It leads to this strange consequence, not to make them love God better, but to venture on offending him more.

People talk as if the act of death made a complete change in the nature, as well as in the condition of man. Death is the vehicle to another state of being, but possesses no power to qualify us for that state. In conveying us to a new world it does not give us a new heart. It puts the unalterable stamp of decision on the character, but does not transform it into a character diametrically opposite.

Our affections themselves will be rather raised than altered. Their tendencies will be the same though their advancement will be incomparably higher. They will be exalted in their degree but not changed in their nature. They will be purified from all earthly mixtures, cleansed from all human pollutions, the principle will be cleared from its imperfections, but it will not become another principle. He that is unholy will not be made holy by death. The heart will not have a new object to seek, but will be directed more intensely to the same object.

They who loved God here will love him far more in heaven, because they will know him far better. There he will reign without a competitor. They who served him here in sincerity will there serve him in perfection. If "the pure in heart shall see God," let us remember that this purity is not to be contracted after we have been admitted to its remuneration. The beatitude is pledged as a reward for the purity, not as a qualification for it. Purity will be sublimated in heaven, but will not begin to be produced there. It is to be acquired by passing through the refiner's fire here, not through the penal and expiatory fire which human ingenuity devised to purge offending man.

From the foul deeds done in his days of nature.

The extricated spirit will be separated from the feculence of all that belongs to sin, to sense, to self. We shall indeed find ourselves new, because spiritualized beings; but if the cast of the mind were not in a great measure the same, how should we retain our identity? The soul will there become that which it here desired to be, that which it mourned because it was so far from being. It will have obtained that complete victory over its corruptions which it here only desired, which it here only struggled to obtain.

Here our love of spiritual things is superinduced, there it will be our natural frame. The impression of God on
our hearts will be stamped deeper, but it will not be a different impression. Our obedience will be more voluntary, because there will be no rival propensities to obstruct it. It will be more entire, because it will have to struggle with no counteracting force.—Here we sincerely though imperfectly love the law of God, even though it controls our perverse will, though it contradicts our corruptions. There our love will be complete, because our will will retain no perverseness, and our corruptions will be done away.

Repentance, precious at all seasons, in the season of health is noble. It is a generous principle when it overtakes us surrounded with the prosperities of life, when it is not put off till distress drives us to it. Seriousness of spirit is most acceptable to God when danger is out of sight, preparation for death when death appears to be at a distance.

Virtue and piety are founded on the nature of things, on the laws of God, not on any vicissitudes in human circumstances. Irreligion, folly and vice, are just as unreasonable in the meridian of life as at the approach of death. They strike us differently but they always retain their own character. Every argument against an irreligious death is equally cogent against an irreligious life. Piety and penitence may be quickened by the near view of death, but the reasons for practising them are not founded on its nearness. Death may stimulate our fears for the consequences of vice, but furnishes no motive for avoiding it, which Christianity had not taught before. The necessity of religion is as urgent now as it will be when we are dying. It may not appear so, but the reality of a thing does not depend on appearances. Besides, if the necessity of being religious depended on the approach of death, what moment of our lives is there, in which we have any security against it? In every point of view therefore, the same necessity for being religious subsists when we are in full health as when we are about to die.

We may then fairly arrive at this conclusion, that there is no happy death but that which conducts to a happy immortality;—No joy in putting off the body, if we have not put on the Lord Jesus Christ—No consolation in escaping from the miseries of time, till we have obtained a well grounded hope of a blessed eternity.
ON THE SUFFERINGS OF GOOD MEN. 203

CHAP. XX.

On the Sufferings of good Men.

Affliction is the school in which great virtues are acquired, in which great characters are formed. It is a kind of moral gymnasium, in which the disciples of Christ are trained to robust exercise, hardy exertion, and severe conflict.

We do not hear of martial heroes in "the calm and piping time of peace," nor of the most eminent saints in the quiet and unmolested periods of ecclesiastical history. We are far from denying that the principle of courage in the warrior, or of piety in the saint continues to subsist, ready to be brought into action when perils beset the country or trials assail the church; but it must be allowed that in long periods of inaction, both are liable to decay.

The Christian, in our comparatively tranquil day, is happily exempt from the trials and the terrors which the annals of persecution record. Thanks to the establishment of a pure Christianity in the church, thanks to the infusion of the same pure principle into our laws, and to the mild and tolerating spirit of both—a man is so far from being liable to pains and penalties for his attachment to his religion, that he is protected in its exercise; and were certain existing statutes enforced, he would even incur penalties for his violation of religious duties, rather than for his observance of them.*

Yet still the Christian is not exempt from his individual, his appropriate, his undefined trials. We refer not merely to those "cruel mockings," which the acute sensibility of the apostle led him to rank in the same catalogue with bonds, imprisonments, exile and martyrdom itself. We allude not altogether to those misrepresentations and calumnies to which the zealous Christian is peculiarly liable; nor exclusively to those difficulties to which his very adherence to the principles he professes, must necessarily subject him; nor entirely to those occasional sacrifices of credit, of advancement, of popular applause; to which his refusing to sail with the tide of popular opinion may compel him; nor solely to the disadvantages which under

* We allude to the laws against swearing, attending public worship, &c.
certain circumstances his not preferring expediency to principle may expose him. But the truly good man is not only often called to struggle with trials of large dimensions, with exigencies of obvious difficulty, but to encounter others which are better understood than defined.

And duller would he be than the fat weed
That rots itself at ease on Lethe’s wharf,
were he left to batten undisturbed, in peaceful security on the unwholesome pastures of rank prosperity. The thick exhalations drawn up from this gross soil render the atmosphere so heavy as to obstruct the ascent of piety, her flagging pinions are kept down by the influence of this moist vapor; she is prevented from soaring,

to live insphered
In regions mild of calm and serene air,
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot
Which men call earth.

The pampered Christian thus continually gravitating to the earth, would have his heart solely bent to

Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,
Unmindful of the crown religion gives
After this mortal change, to her true servants.

It is an unspeakable blessing that no events are left to the choice of beings, who from their blindness would seldom fail to choose amiss. Were circumstances at our own disposal, we should allot ourselves nothing but ease and success, but riches and fame, but protracted youth, perpetual health, unvaried happiness.

All this, as it would be very unnatural, so perhaps it would not be very wrong, for beings who were always to live on earth. But for beings who are placed here in a state of trial, and not established in their final home, whose condition in eternity depends on the use they make of time, nothing would be more dangerous than such a power, nothing more fatal than the consequences to which such a power would lead.

If a surgeon were to put into the hand of a wounded patient the probe or the lancet, with how much false tenderness would he treat himself! How skin-deep would be the examination, how slight the incision! The patient would escape the pain, but the wound might prove mortal. The practitioner therefore wisely uses his instruments himself. He goes deep perhaps, but not deeper than the case demands. The pain may be acute, but the life is preserved.
Thus He in whose hands we are, is too good, and loves us too well to trust us with ourselves. He knows that we will not contradict our own inclinations, that we will not impose on ourselves any thing unpleasant, that we will not inflict on ourselves any voluntary pain, however necessary the infliction, however salutary the effect. God graciously does this for us himself, or he knows it would never be done.

A Christian is liable to the same sorrows and sufferings with other men: he has nowhere any promise of immunity from the troubles of life, but he has a merciful promise of support under them. He considers them in another view, he bears them with another spirit, he improves them to other purposes than those whose views are bounded by this world. Whatever may be the instruments of his suffering, whether sickness, losses, calumnies, persecutions, he knows that it proceeds from God; all means are his instruments. All inferior causes operate by his directing hand.

We said that a Christian is liable to the same sufferings with other men. Might we not repeat what we have before said, that his very Christian profession is often the cause of his sufferings? They are the badge of his discipleship, the evidences of his father’s love; they are at once the marks of God’s favor, and the materials of his own future happiness.

What were the arguments of worldly advantage held out through the whole New Testament to induce the world to embrace the religion it taught? What was the condition of St. Paul’s introduction to Christianity? It was not — I will crown him with honor and prosperity, with dignity and pleasure, but — "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake."

What were the virtues which Christ chiefly taught in his discourses? What were the graces he most recommended by his example? Self-denial, mortification, patience, long-suffering, renouncing ease and pleasure. These are the marks which have ever since its first appearance, distinguished Christianity from all the religions in the world, and on that account evidently prove its divine original. Ease, splendor, external prosperity, conquest, made no part of its establishment. Other empires have been founded in the blood of the vanquished, the dominion of Christ was founded in his own blood. Most of the beatitudes which infinite compassion pronounced, have the sorrows of earth for their subject, but the joys of heaven for their completion.
To establish this religion in the world, the Almighty, as his own word assures us, subverted kingdoms and altered the face of nations. "For thus saith the Lord of Hosts," (by his prophet Haggai) "yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come." Could a religion, the kingdom of which was to be founded by such awful means, be established, be perpetuated, without involving the sufferings of its subjects?

If the Christian course had been meant for a path of roses, would the life of the Author of Christianity have been a path strewed with thorns? "He made for us," says bishop Jeremy Taylor, "a covenant of sufferings, his very promises were sufferings, his rewards were sufferings, and his arguments to invite men to follow him were only taken from sufferings in this life and the reward of sufferings hereafter."

But if no prince but the prince of peace ever set out with a proclamation of the reversionary nature of his empire—if no other king, to allay avarice and check ambition, ever invited subjects by the unalluring declaration that "his kingdom was not of this world"—if none other ever declared that it was not dignity or honors, valor or talents, that made them "worthy of him," but "taking up the cross"—if no other ever made the sorrows which would attend his followers a motive for their attachment—yet no other ever had the goodness to promise, or the power to make his promise good, that he would give "rest to the heavy laden." Other sovereigns have "overcome the world" for their own ambition, but none besides ever thought of making the "tribulation" which should be the effect of that conquest, a ground for animating the fidelity of his followers—ever thought of bidding them "be of good cheer," because he had overcome the world in a sense which was to make his subjects lose all hope of rising in it.

The apostle to the Philippians enumerated it among the honors and distinctions prepared for his most favored converts, not only that "they should believe in Christ," but that they should also "suffer for him." Any other religion would have made use of such a promise as an argument to deter, not to attract. That a religion should flourish the more under such discouraging invitations, with the threat of even degrading circumstances and absolute losses, is an unanswerable evidence that it was of no human origin.
It is among the mercies of God, that he strengthens the virtues of his servants by hardening them under the cold and bracing climate of adverse fortune, instead of leaving them to languish under the shining but withering sun of unclouded prosperity. When they cannot be attracted to him by gentler influences, he sends these salutary storms and tempests, which purify while they alarm. Our gracious father knows that eternity is long enough for his children to be happy in.

The character of Christianity may be seen by the very images of military conflict, under which the Scriptures so frequently exhibit it. Suffering is the initiation into a Christian’s calling. It is his education for heaven. Shall the scholar rebel at the discipline which is to fit him for his profession, or the soldier at the exercise which is to qualify him for victory?

But the Christian’s trials do not all spring from without. He would think them comparatively easy, had he only the opposition of men to struggle against, or even the severer dispensations of God to sustain. If he has a conflict with the world, he has a harder conflict with sin. His bosom foe is his most unyielding enemy;

His warfare is within, there unfatigued
His fervent spirit labors.

This it is which makes his other trials heavy, which makes his power of sustaining them weak, which renders his conquest over them slow and inconclusive; which too often solicits him to oppose interest to duty, indolence to resistance, and self-indulgence to victory.

This world is the stage on which worldly men more exclusively act, and the things of the world, and the applause of the world, are the rewards which they propose to themselves. These they often attain—with these they are satisfied. They aim at no higher end, and of their aim they are not disappointed. But let not the Christian repine at the success of those whose motives he rejects, whose practices he dares not adopt, whose ends he deprecates. If he feel any disposition to murmur when he sees the irreligious in great prosperity, let him ask himself if he would tread their path to attain their end—if he would do their work to obtain their wages? He knows he would not. Let him then cheerfully leave them to scramble for the prizes, and jostle for the places, which the world temptingly holds out, but which he will not purchase at the world’s price.
Consult the page of history, and observe, not only if the best men have been the most successful, but even if they have not often eminently failed in great enterprises, undertaken perhaps on the purest principles; while unworthy instruments have been often employed, not only to produce dangerous revolutions, but to bring about events ultimately tending to the public benefit; enterprises in which good men feared to engage, which perhaps they were not competent to effect, or in effecting which they might have wounded their conscience and endangered their souls.

Good causes are not always conducted by good men. A good cause may be connected with something that is not good, with party for instance. Party often does that for virtue, which virtue is not able to do for herself; and thus the right cause is promoted and effectual by some subordinate, even by some wrong motive. A worldly man, connecting himself with a religious cause, gives it that importance in the eyes of the world, which neither its own rectitude, nor that of its religious supporters, had been able to give it. Nay the very piety of its advocates—for worldly men always connect piety with imprudence—had brought the wisdom, or at least the expediency of the cause into suspicion, and it is at last carried by a means foreign to itself. The character of the cause must be lowered, we had almost said, it must in a certain degree be deteriorated, to suit the general taste, even to obtain the approbation of that multitude for whose benefit it is intended.

How long, as we have had occasion to observe in another connection, had the world groaned under the most tremendous engine which superstition and despotism, in dreadful confederacy, ever contrived to force the consciences, and torture the bodies of men; where racks were used for persuasion, and flames for arguments! The best of men for ages have been mourning under this dread tribunal, without being competent to effect its overthrow; the worst of men has been able to accomplish it with a word.—It is a humiliating lesson for good men, when they thus see how entirely instrumentality may be separated from personal virtue.

We still fall into the error of which the prophet so long ago complained, "we call the proud happy," and the wicked fortunate, and our hearts are too apt to rise at their successes. We pretend indeed that they rise with indignation; but is it not to be feared that with this indignation is mixed a little envy, a little rebellion against God? We
murmur, though we know that when the instrument has finished his work, the divine employer throws him by, cuts him off, lets him perish.

But you envy him in the midst of that work, to accomplish which he has sacrificed every principle of justice, truth, and mercy. Is this a man to be envied? Is this a prosperity to be grudged? Would you incur the penalties of that happiness at which you are not ashamed to murmur?

But is it happiness to commit sin, to be abhorred by good men, to offend God, to ruin his own soul? Do you really consider a temporary success a recompense for deeds which will insure eternal woe to the perpetrator? Is the successful bad man happy? Of what materials then is happiness made up? Is it composed of a disturbed mind and an unquiet conscience? Are doubt and difficulty, terror and apprehension, are distrust and suspicion, felicities for which a Christian would renounce his peace, would displease his Maker, would risk his soul? Think of the hidden vulture that feeds on the vitals of successful wickedness, and your repinings, your envy, if you are so unhappy as to feel envy, will cease. Your indignation will be converted into compassion, your execrations into prayer.

But if he feel neither the scourge of conscience nor the sting of remorse, pity him the more. Pity him for the very want of that addition to his unhappiness: for if he added to his miseries that of anticipating his punishment, he might be led by repentance to avoid it. Can you reckon the blinding his eyes and the hardening his heart, any part of his happiness? This opinion, however, you practically adopt, whenever you grudge the prosperity of the wicked God, by delaying the punishment of bad men, for which we are so impatient, may have designs of mercy of which we know nothing—mercy perhaps to them, or if not to them, yet mercy to those who are suffering by them, and whom he intends by these bad instruments, to punish, and, by punishing, eventually to save.

There is another sentiment which prosperous wickedness excites in certain minds, that is almost more preposterous than envy itself, and that is respect; but this feeling is never raised unless both the wickedness and the prosperity be on a grand scale.

This sentiment also is founded in secret impiety, in the belief either that God does not govern human affairs, or that the motives of actions are not regarded by him, or that prosperity is a certain proof of his favor, or that where
There is success there must be worth. These flatterers, however, forsake the prosperous with their good fortune; their applause is withheld with the success which attracted it. As they were governed by events in their admiration, so events lead them to withdraw it.

But in this admiration there is a bad taste as well as a bad principle. If ever wickedness pretends to excite any idea of sublimity, it must be, not in its elevation but its fall. If ever Caius Marius raises any such sentiment, it is not when he carried the world before him, it is not in his seditious and bloody triumphs at Rome, but it is when in poverty and exile his intrepid look caused the dagger to drop from the hand of the executioner;—it is, when sitting among the venerable ruins of Carthage he enjoyed a desolation so congenial to his own. Dionysius, in the plenitude of arbitrary power, raises our unmixed abhorrence. We detest the oppressor of the people while he continued to trample on them; we execrate the monster who was not ashamed to sell Plato as a slave. If ever we feel any thing like interest on his subject, it is not with the tyrant of Syracuse but with the school-master of Corinth.

But though God may be patient with triumphant wickedness, he does not wink or connive at it. Between being permitted and supported, between being employed and approved, the distance is wider than we are ready to acknowledge. Perhaps "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." God has always the means of punishment as well as of pardon in his own hands. But to punish just at the moment when we would hurl the bolt, might break in on a scheme of Providence of wide extent and indefinite consequences. "They have drunk their hemlock," says a fine writer, "but the poison does not yet work." Perhaps the convulsion may be the more terrible for the delay. Let us not be impatient to accomplish a sentence which Infinite Justice sees right to defer—It is always time enough to enter into hell. Let us think more of restraining our own vindictive tempers, than of precipitating their destruction. They may yet repent of the crimes they are perpetrating. God may still by some scheme, intricate, and unintelligible to us, pardon the sin which we think exceeds the limits even of his mercy.

But we contrive to make revenge itself look like religion. We call down thunder on many a head under pretence that those on whom we invoke it are God's enemies, when perhaps we invoke it because they are ours.
But though they should go on with a full tide of prosperity to the end, will it not cure our impatience that that end must come? will it not satisfy us that they must die, that they must come to judgment? Which is to be envied, the Christian who dies and his brief sorrows have a period, or he who closes a prosperous life and enters on a miserable eternity? The one has nothing to fear if the promises of the Gospel be true, the other nothing to hope if they be not false. The word of God must be a lie, heaven a fable, hell an invention, before the impenitent sinner can be safe. Is that man to be envied whose security depends on their falsehood? Is the other to be pitied whose hope is founded on their reality. Can that state be happiness, which results from believing that there is no God, no future reckoning? Can that state be misery which consists in knowing that there is both?

In estimating the comparative happiness of good and bad men, we should ever bear in mind that of all the calamities which can be inflicted or suffered, sin is the greatest; and of all punishments, insensibility to sin is the heaviest which the wrath of God inflicts in this world for the commission of it. God so far then from approving a wicked man, because he suffers him to go on triumphantly, seems rather, by allowing him to continue his smooth and prosperous course, to have some awful destiny in store for him, which will not perhaps be revealed till his repentance is too late; then his knowledge of God's displeasure, and the dreadful consequences of that displeasure, may be revealed together, may be revealed when there is no room for mercy.

But without looking to futurity—consulting only the present condition of suffering virtue; if we put the inward consolation derived from communion with God, the humble confidence of prayer, the devout trust in the divine protection—supports commonly reserved for the afflicted Christian, and eminently bestowed in his greatest exigence; if we place these feelings in the opposite scale with all that unjust power ever bestowed, or guilty wealth possessed; we shall have no hesitation in deciding on which side even present happiness lies.

With a mind thus fixed, with a faith thus firm, one great object so absorbs the Christian, that his peace is not tossed about with the things which discompose ordinary men. "My fortune," may he say, "it is true, is shattered; but as I made not 'fine gold my confidence' while I posses-
saw it, in losing it I have not lost myself. I leaned not on power, for I knew its instability. Had prosperity been my dependence, my support being removed, I must fall."

In the case of the afflicted Christian you lament perhaps with the wife of the persecuted hero, that he suffers being innocent. But would it extract the sting from suffering, were guilt added to it? Out of two worlds to have all sorrow in this and no hope in the next would be indeed intolerable. Would you have him purchase a reprieve from suffering, by sinful compliances? Think how ease would be destroyed by the price paid for it! for how short a time he would enjoy it, even if it were not bought at the expense of his soul!

It would be preposterous to say that suffering is the recompense of virtue, and yet it may with truth be asserted that the capacity for enjoying the reward of virtue is enlarged by suffering; and thus it becomes not only the instrument of promoting virtue, but the instrument of rewarding it. Besides, God chooses for the confirmation of our faith, as well as for the consummation of his gracious plans, to reserve in his own hand this most striking proof of a future retribution. To suppose that he cannot ultimately recompense his virtuous, afflicted children, is to believe him less powerful than an earthly father—to suppose that he will not, is to believe him less merciful.

Great trials are oftener proofs of favor than of displeasure. An inferior officer will suffice for inferior expeditions, but the sovereign selects the ablest general for the most difficult service. And not only does the king evidence his opinion by the selection, but the soldier proves his attachment by rejoicing in the preference. His having gained one victory is no reason for his being set aside. Conquest which qualifies him for new attacks, suggests a reason for his being again employed.

The sufferings of good men by no means contradict the promise that "godliness has the promise of the life that now is," nor that promise "that the meek shall inherit the earth." They possess it by the spirit in which they enjoy its blessings, by the spirit with which they resign them.

The belief too that trials will facilitate salvation is another source of consolation. Sufferings also abate the dread of death by cheapening the price of life. The affections even of the real Christian are too much drawn downwards. His heart too fondly cleaves to the dust, though he knows that trouble springs out of it. How would it be, if he invariably possessed present enjoyments, and if a long vista of
delights lay always open before him? He has a farther comfort in his own honest consciousness; a bright conviction that his Christian feeling under trials is a cheering evidence that his piety is sincere. The gold has been melted down, and its purity is ascertained.

Among his other advantages, the afflicted Christian has that of being able to apply to the mercy of God, not as a new and untried, and therefore an uncertain resource. He does not come as an alien before a strange master, but as a child into the well known presence of a tender father. He did not put off prayer till this pressing exigence. He did not make his God a sort of dernier resort to be had recourse to only in the great waterfloods. He had long and diligently sought him in the calm; he had adhered to him, if the phrase may be allowed, before he was driven to it. He had sought God's favor while he enjoyed the favor of the world. He did not wait for the day of evil to seek the supreme good. He did not defer his meditations on heavenly things to the disconsolate hour when earth has nothing for him. He can cheerfully associate religion with those former days of felicity, when with every thing before him out of which to choose, he chose God. He not only feels the support derived from his present prayers, but the benefit of all those which he offered up in the day of joy and gladness. He will especially derive comfort from the supplications he had made for the anticipated though unknown trial of the present hour, and which, in such a world of vicissitudes, it was reasonable to expect.

Let us confess then, that in all the trying circumstances of this changeful scene, there is something infinitely soothing to the feelings of a Christian, something inexpressibly tranquillizing to his mind, to know that he has nothing to do with events but to submit to them; that he has nothing to do with the revolutions of life but to acquiesce in them, as the dispensations of eternal wisdom; that he has not to take the management out of the hands of Providence, but submissively to follow the divine leading; that he has not to contrive for to-morrow, but to acquiesce to-day; not to condition about events yet to come, but to meet those which are present with cheerful resignation. Let him be thankful that as he could not by foreseeing prevent them, so he was not permitted to foresee them; thankful for ignorance where knowledge would only prolong without preventing suffering; thankful for that grace which has promised that our strength shall be proportioned to our day; thankful that as
he is not responsible for trials which he has not brought on himself, so by the goodness of God these trials may be improved to the noblest purposes. The quiet acquiescence of the heart, the annihilation of the will under actual circumstances, be the trial great or small, is more acceptable to God, more indicative of true piety, than the strongest general resolutions of firm acting and deep submission under the most trying unborn events. In the remote case it is the imagination which submits: in the actual case it is the will.

We are too ready to imagine that there is no other way of serving God but by active exertions; exertions which are often made because they indulge our natural taste, and gratify our own inclinations. But it is an error to imagine that God by putting us into any supposable situation, puts it out of our power to glorify him; that he can place us under any circumstances which may not be turned to some account, either for ourselves or others. Joseph in his prison, under the strongest disqualifications, loss of liberty and a blasted reputation, made way for both his own high advancement and for the deliverance of Israel. Daniel in his dungeon, not only the destined prey, but in the very jaws of furious beasts, converted the king of Babylon and brought him to the knowledge of the true God. Could prosperity have effected the former? Would not prosperity have prevented the latter?

But to descend to more familiar instances—It is among the ordinary, though most mysterious dispensations of Providence, that many of his appointed servants, who are not only eminently fitted, but also most zealously disposed, to glorify their Redeemer by instructing and reforming their fellow creatures, are yet disqualified by disease, and set aside from that public duty of which the necessity is so obvious, and of which the fruits were so remarkable, whilst many others possess uninterrupted health and strength, for the exercise of those functions for which they are little gifted and less disposed.

But God's ways are not as our ways. He is not accountable to his creatures. The caviller would know why it is right. The suffering Christian believes and feels it to be right. He humbly acknowledges the necessity of the affliction which his friends are lamenting; he feels the mercy of the measure which others are suspecting of injustice. With deep humility he is persuaded that if the affliction is not yet withdrawn, it is because it has not yet accomplish-
ed the purpose for which it was sent. The privation is probably intended both for the individual interests of the sufferer, and for the reproof of those who have neglected to profit by his labors. Perhaps God more especially thus draws still nearer to himself, him who had drawn so many others.

But to take a more particular view of the case, we are too ready to consider suffering as an indication of God's displeasure, not so much against sin in general, as against the individual sufferer. Were this the case, then would those saints and martyrs who have pined in exile, and groaned in dungeons, and expired on scaffolds, have been the objects of God's peculiar wrath instead of his special favor. But the truth is, some little tincture of latent infidelity mixes itself in almost all our reasonings on these topics. We do not constantly take into the account a future state. We want God, if I may hazard the expression, to clear himself as he goes. We cannot give him such long credit as the period of human life. He must every moment be vindicating his character against every skeptical cavil; he must unravel his plans to every shallow critic, he must anticipate the knowledge of his design before its operations are completed. If we may adopt a phrase in use among the vulgar, we will trust him no farther than we can see him. Though he has said, "judge nothing before the time," we judge instantly, of course rashly, and in general falsely. Were the brevity of earthly prosperity and suffering, the certainty of retributive justice, and the eternity of future blessedness perpetually kept in view, we should have more patience with God.

Even in judging fictitious compositions, we are more just. During the perusal of a tragedy, or any work of invention, though we feel for the distresses of the personages, yet we do not form an ultimate judgment of the propriety or injustice of their sufferings. We wait for the catastrophe. We give the poet credit either that he will extricate them from their distresses, or eventually explain the justice of them. We do not condemn him at the end of every scene for the trials of that scene, which the sufferers do not appear to have deserved; for the sufferings which do not always seem to have arisen from their own misconduct. We behold the trials of the virtuous with sympathy, and the successes of the wicked with indignation; but we do not pass our final sentence till the poet has passed his. We reserve our decisive judgment till the last scene closes,
till the curtain drops. Shall we not treat the schemes of infinite wisdom with as much respect as the plot of a drama.

But to borrow our illustration from realities.—In a court of justice the by-standers do not give their sentence in the midst of a trial. We wait patiently till all the evidence is collected, and circumstantially detailed and finally summed up. And—to pursue the allusion—imperfect as human decisions may possibly be, fallible as we must allow the most deliberate and honest verdict must prove, we commonly applaud the justice of the jury and the equity of the judge. The felon they condemn, we rarely acquit; where they remit judgment, we rarely denounce it.—It is only INFINITE WISDOM on whose purposes we cannot rely; it is only INFINITE MERCY whose operations we cannot trust. It is only “the Judge of all the earth” who cannot do right. We reverse the order of God by summoning HIM to our bar, at whose awful bar we shall soon be judged.

But to return to our more immediate point—the apparently unfair distribution of prosperity between good and bad men. As their case is opposite in every thing—the one is constantly deriving his happiness from that which is the source of the other’s misery, a sense of the divine omniscience. The eye of God is “a pillar of light” to the one, “and a cloud and darkness” to the other. It is no less a terror to him who dreads His justice than a joy to him who derives all his support from the awful thought THOU GOD SEEST!

But as we have already observed, can we want a broader line of discrimination between them, than their actual condition here, independently of the different portions reserved for them hereafter? Is it not distinction enough that the one though sad is safe; that the other, though confident is insecure? Is not the one as far from rest as he is from virtue, as far from the enjoyment of quiet as from the hope of heaven? as far from peace as he is from God? Is it nothing that every day brings the Christian nearer to his crown, and that the sinner is every day working his way nearer to his ruin? The hour of death, which the one dreads as something worse than extinction, is to the other the hour of his nativity, the birth-day of immortality. At the height of his sufferings, the good man knows that they will soon terminate. In the zenith of his success the sinner has a similar assurance. But how different is the result of the same conviction! An invincible faith sustains the one, in the severest calamities, while an inextinguish-
able dread gives the lie to the proudest triumphs of the other.

He, then, after all, is the only happy man, not whom worldly prosperity renders apparently happy, but whom no change of worldly circumstances can make essentially miserable; whose peace depends not on external events, but on an internal support; not on that success which is common to all, but on that hope which is the peculiar privilege, on that promise which is the sole prerogative of the Christian.

CHAP. XXI.

The Temper and Conduct of the Christian in Sickness and in Death.

The Pagan philosophers have given many admirable precepts both for resigning blessings and for sustaining misfortunes; but wanting the motives and sanctions of Christianity, though they excite much intellectual admiration, they produce little practical effect. The stars which glittered in their moral night, though bright, imparted no warmth. Their most beautiful dissertations on death had no charm to extract its sting. We receive no support from their most elaborate treatises on immortality, for want of him who "brought life and immortality to light." Their consolatory discussions could not strip the grave of its terrors, for to them it was not "swallowed up in victory." To conceive of the soul as an immortal principle, without proposing a scheme for the pardon of its sins, was but cold consolation. Their future state was but a happy guess; their heaven but a fortunate conjecture.

When we peruse their finest compositions, we admire the manner in which the medicine is administered, but we do not find it effectual for the cure, nor even for the mitigation of our disease. The beauty of the sentiment we applaud, but our heart continues to ache. There is no healing balm in their elegant prescription. These four little words "thy will be done," contain a charm of more powerful efficacy than all the discipline of the stoic school. They cut up a long train of clear but cold reasoning, and supersede whole volumes of argument on Fate and Necessity.
What sufferer ever derived any ease from the subtle distinction of the hair-splitting casuist, who allowed "that pain was very troublesome, but resolved never to acknowledge it to be an evil?" There is an equivocation in his manner of stating the proposition. He does not directly say that pain is not an evil, but by a sophistical turn professes that philosophy will never confess it to be an evil. But what consolation does the sufferer draw from the quibbling nicety? "What difference is there," as Archbishop Tillotson well inquires, "between things being troublesome and being evils, when all the evil of an afflic-
tion lies in the trouble it creates to us?"

Christianity knows none of these fanciful distinctions. She never pretends to insist that pain is not an evil, but she does more; she converts it into a good. Christianity therefore teaches a fortitude as much more noble than philosophy, as meeting pain with resignation to the hand that inflicts it, is more heroic than denying it to be an evil.

To submit on the mere human ground that there is no alternative, is not resignation but hopelessness. To bear affliction solely because impatience will not remove it, is but an inferior, though a just reason for bearing it. It savors rather of despair than submission when not sanctioned by a higher principle.—"It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good," is at once a motive of more powerful obligation than all the documents which philosophy ever suggested; a firmer ground of support than all the energies that natural fortitude ever supplied.

Under any visitation, sickness for instance, God permits us to think the affliction "not joyous but grievous." But though he allows us to feel, we must not allow ourselves to repine. There is again a sort of heroism in bearing up against affliction, which some adopt on the ground that it raises their character, and confers dignity on their suffering. This philosophic firmness is far from being the temper which Christianity inculcates.

When we are compelled by the hand of God to endure sufferings, or driven by a conviction of the vanity of the world to renounce its enjoyments, we must not endure the one on the low principle of its being inevitable, nor, in flying from the other, must we retire to the contemplation of our own virtues. We must not, with a sullen intrepidity, collect ourselves into a centre of our own; into a cold apathy to all without, and a proud approbation of all within. We must not contract our scattered faults into a sort of dignified
selfishness; nor concentrate our feelings into a proud magnanimity; we must not adopt an independent rectitude. A gloomy stoicism is not Christian heroism. A melancholy non-resistance is not Christian resignation.

Nor must we indemnify ourselves for our outward self-control by secret murmurings. We may be admired for our resolution in this instance, as for our generosity and disinterestedness in other instances; but we deserve little commendation for whatever we give up, if we do not give up our own inclination. It is inward repining that we must endeavor to repress; it is the discontent of the heart, the unexpressed but not unfelt murmur, against which we must pray for grace, and struggle for resistance. We must not smother our discontents before others, and feed on them in private. It is the hidden rebellion of the will we must subdue, if we would submit as Christians. Nor must we justify our impatience by saying, that if our affliction did not disqualify us from being useful to our families, and active in the service of God, we could more cheerfully bear it. Let us rather be assured that it does not disqualify us for that duty which we most need, and to which God calls us by the very disqualification.

A constant posture of defence against the attacks of our great spiritual enemy, is a better security than an incidental blow, or even an occasional victory. It is also a better preparation for all the occurrences of life. It is not some signal act of mortification, but an habitual state of discipline which will prepare us for great trials. A soul ever on the watch, fervent in prayer, diligent in self-inspection, frequent in meditation, fortified against the vanities of time by repeated views of eternity—all the avenues to such a heart will be in a good measure shut against temptation, barred in a great degree against the tempter. "Strong in the Lord and in the power of his might," it will be enabled to resist the one, to expel the other. To a mind so prepared, the thoughts of sickness will not be new, for he knows it is the "condition of the battle:" The prospect of death will not be surprising, for he knows it is its termination.

The period is now come when we must summon all the fortitude of the rational being, all the resignation of the Christian. The principles we have been learning must now be made practical.—The speculations we have admired we must now realize. All that we have been studying was in order to furnish materials for this grand exigence. All the strength we have been collecting must now be brought into
action. We must now draw to a point all the scattered arguments, all the several motives, all the individual supports, all the cheering promises of religion. We must exemplify all the rules we have given to others; we must embody all the resolutions we have formed for ourselves; we must reduce our precepts to experience; we must pass from discourses on submission to its exercise; from dissertations on suffering to sustaining it. We must heroically call up the determinations of our better days. We must recollect what we have said of the supports of faith and hope when our strength was in full vigor, when our heart was at ease, and our mind undisturbed. Let us collect all that remains to us of mental strength. Let us implore the aid of holy hope and fervent faith, to show that religion is not a beautiful theory but a soul-sustaining truth.

Endeavor without harassing scrutiny or distressing doubt, to act on the principles which your sounder judgment formerly admitted. The strongest faith is wanted in the hardest trials. Under those trials, to the confirmed Christian, the highest degree of grace is commonly imparted. Impair not that faith on which you rested when your mind was strong, by suspecting its validity now it is weak. That which had your full assent in perfect health, which was then firmly rooted in your spirit, and grounded in your understanding, must not be unfixed by the doubts of an enfeebled reason and the scruples of an impaired judgment. You may not now be able to determine on the reasonableness of propositions, but you may derive strong consolation from conclusions which were once fully established in your mind.

The reflecting Christian will consider the natural evil of sickness as the consequence and punishment of moral evil. He will mourn, not only that he suffers pain, but because that pain is the effect of sin. If man had not sinned he would not have suffered. The heaviest aggravation of his pain is to know that he has deserved it. But it is a counterbalance to this trial to know that our merciful Father has no pleasure in the sufferings of his children, that he chastens them in love, that he never inflicts a stroke which he could safely spare; that he inflicts it to purify as well as to punish, to caution as well as to cure, to improve as well as to chastise.

What a support in the dreary season of sickness is it to reflect, that the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings; that if we suffer with him we shall also
reign with him, which implies also the reverse, that if we do not suffer with him, we shall not reign with him; that is, if we suffer merely because we cannot help it, without reference to him, without suffering for his sake and in his spirit. If it be not sanctified suffering it will avail but little. We shall not be paid for having suffered, as in the creed of too many, but our meetness for the kingdom of glory will be increased if we suffer according to his will and after his example.

He who is brought to serious reflection by the salutary affliction of a sick bed, will look back with astonishment on his former false estimate of worldly things. Riches! Beauty! Pleasure! Genius! Fame!—what are they in the eyes of the sick and dying?

Riches! These are so far from affording him a moment's ease, that it will be well if no former misapplication of them aggravate his present pains. He feels as if he only wished to live that he might henceforth dedicate them to the purposes for which they were given.

Beauty! What is beauty, he cries, as he considers his own sunk eyes, hollow cheeks, and pallid countenance. He acknowledges with the Psalmist, that the consuming of beauty is "the rebuke with which the Almighty corrects man for sin."

Genius! What is it? Without religion, genius is only a lamp on the gate of a palace. It may serve to cast a gleam of light on those without, while the inhabitant sits in darkness.

Pleasure! That has not left a trace behind it. "It died in the birth, and is not therefore worthy to come into this bill of mortality."*

Fame! Of this his very soul acknowledges the emptiness. He is astonished how he could ever be so infatuated as to run after a sound, to court a breath, to pursue a shadow, to embrace a cloud. Augustus, asking his friends as they surrounded his dying bed, if he had acted his part well, on their answering in the affirmative, cried plaudite. But the acclamations of the whole universe would rather mock than soothe the dying Christian if unsanctioned by the hope of the divine approbation. He now rates at its just value that fame which was so often eclipsed by envy, and which will be so soon forgotten in death. He has no ambition left but for heaven, where there will be neither envy, death, nor forgetfulness.

* Bishop Hall.
When capable of reflection, the sick Christian will revolve all the sins and errors of his past life; he will humbly himself for them as sincerely as if he had never repeated of them before; and implore the divine forgiveness as fervently as if he did not believe they were long since forgiven. The remembrance of his former offences will grieve him, but the humble hope that they are pardoned will fill him "with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Even in this state of helplessness he may improve his self-acquaintance. He may detect new deficiencies in his character, fresh imperfections in his virtues. Omissions will now strike him with the force of actual sins. Resignation, which he fancied was so easy when only the sufferings of others required it, he now finds to be difficult when called on to practice it himself. He has sometimes wondered at their impatience, he is now humbled at his own. He will not only try to bear patiently the pains he actually suffers, but will recollect gratefully those from which he has been delivered, and which he may have formerly found less supportable than his present sufferings.

In the extremity of pain he feels there is no consolation but in humble acquiescence in the divine will. It may be that he can pray but little, but that little will be fervent. He can articulate perhaps not at all, but his prayer is addressed to one who sees the heart, who can interpret its language, who requires not words but affections. A pang endured without a murmur, or only such an involuntary groan as nature extorts, and faith regrets, is itself a prayer.

If surrounded with all the accommodations of affluence, let him compare his own situation with that of thousands, who probably with greater merit, and under severer trials, have not one of his alleviations. When invited to the distasteful remedy, let him reflect how many perishing fellow creatures may be pining for that remedy, to whom it might be restorative, or who, fancying that it might be so, suffer additional distress from their inability to procure it.

In the intervals of severer pain he will turn his few advantages to the best account. He will make the most of every short respite. He will patiently bear with little disappointments, little delays, with the awkwardness or accidental neglect of his attendants, and, thankful for general kindness, he will accept good-will instead of perfection. The suffering Christian will be grateful for small reliefs, little alleviations, short snatches of rest. To him abated pain will be positive pleasure. The freer use of limbs which
had nearly lost their activity, will be enjoyments. Let not the reader who is rioting

In all the madness of superfluous health,

think lightly of these trivial comforts Let him not despise them as not worthy of gratitude, or as not capable of exciting it. He may one day, and that no distant day, be brought to the same state of debility and pain. May he experience the mercies he now derides, and may he feel higher comforts on safe grounds!

The sufferer has perhaps often regretted that one of the worst effects of sickness is the selfishness it too naturally induces. The temptation to this he will resist, by not being exacting and unreasonable in his requisitions. Through his tenderness to the feelings of others, he will be careful not to add to their distress by any appearance of discontent.

What a lesson against selfishness have we in the conduct of our dying Redeemer!—It was while bearing his cross to the place of execution, that he said to the sorrowing multitude, "weep not for me, but for yourselves and for your children."—It was while enduring the agonies of crucifixion that he endeavored to mitigate the sorrows of his mother and of his friend, by tenderly committing them to each other’s care.—It was while sustaining the pangs of dissolution, that he gave the immediate promise of heaven to the expiring criminal.

The Christian will review, if able, not only the sins, but the mercies, of his past life. If previously accustomed to unbroken health, he will bless God for the long period in which he has enjoyed it. If continued infirmity has been his portion, he will feel grateful that he has had such a long and gradual weaning from the world. From either state he will extract consolation. If pain be new, what a mercy to have hitherto escaped it! If habitual, we bear more easily what we have borne long.

He will review his temporal blessings and deliverances; his domestic comforts, his Christian friendships. Among his mercies his now "purged eyes" will reckon his difficulties, his sorrows and trials. A new and heavenly light will be thrown on that passage, "it is good for me that I have been afflicted." It seems to him as if hitherto, he had only heard it with the hearing of his ear, but now his "eye seeth it." If he be a real Christian, and has had enemies, he will always have prayed for them, but now he will be thankful for them. He will the more earnestly implore mer
cy for them as instruments which have helped to fit him for his present state. He will look up with holy gratitude to the great Physician, who by a divine chemistry in making up events, has made that one unpalatable ingredient, at the bitterness of which he once revolted, the very means by which all other things have worked together for good; had they worked separately they would not have worked efficaciously.

Under the most severe visitation, let us compare, if the capacity of comparing be allowed us, our own sufferings with the cup which our Redeemer drank for our sakes; drank to avert the divine displeasure from us. Let us pursue the comparative view of our condition with that of the Son of God. He was deserted in his most trying hour; deserted probably by those whose limbs, sight, life, he had restored, whose souls he had come to save. We are surrounded by unwearied friends; every pain is mitigated by sympathy, every want not only relieved but prevented; the "asking eye" explored; the inarticulate sound understood; the ill-expressed wish anticipated; the but suspected want supplied. When our souls are "exceeding sorrowful," our friends participate our sorrow; when desired "to watch" with us, they watch not "one hour" but many, not falling asleep, but both flesh and spirit ready and willing; not forsaking us in our "agony" but sympathizing where they cannot relieve.

Besides this, we must acknowledge with the penitent malefactor, "we indeed suffer justly, but this man hath done nothing amiss." We suffer for our offences the inevitable penalty of our fallen nature. He bore our sins and those of the whole human race. Hence the heart rending interrogation, "is it nothing to you all ye that pass by? Behold and see if there be any sorrow, like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger."

How cheering in this forlorn state to reflect that he not only suffered for us then, but is sympathizing with us now; that "in all our afflictions he is afflicted." The tenderness of the sympathy seems to add a value to the sacrifice, while the vastness of the sacrifice endears the sympathy by ennobling it.

If the intellectual powers be mercifully preserved, how many virtues may now be brought into exercise which had either lain dormant or been considered as of inferior worth in the prosperous day of activity. The Christian temper
indeed seems to be that part of religion which is more peculiarly to be exercised on a sick bed. The passive virtues, the least brilliant, but the most difficult, are then particularly called into action. To suffer the whole will of God on the tedious bed of languishing, is more trying than to perform the most shining exploit on the theatre of the world. The hero in the field of battle has the love of fame as well as patriotism to support him. He knows that the witnesses of his valor will be the heralds of his renown. The martyr at the stake is divinely strengthened. Extraordinary grace is imparted for extraordinary trials. His pangs are exquisite but they are short. The crown is in sight, it is almost in possession. By faith "he sees the heavens opened. He sees the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." But to be strong in faith, and patient in hope, in a long and lingering sickness, is an example of more general use and ordinary application, than even the sublime heroism of the martyr. The sickness is brought home to our feelings, we see it with our eyes, we apply it to our hearts. Of the martyr we read, indeed, with astonishment: our faith is strengthened, and our admiration kindled; but we read it without that special approbation, without that peculiar reference to our own circumstances, which we feel in cases that are likely to apply to ourselves. With the dying friend we have not only a feeling of pious tenderness, but there is also a community of interests. The certain conviction that his case must soon be our own, makes it our own now. Self mixes with the social feeling, and the Christian death we are contemplating we do not so much admire as a prodigy, as propose for a model. To the martyr's stake we feel that we are not likely to be brought. To the dying bed we must inevitably come.

Accommodating his state of mind to the nature of his disease, the dying Christian will derive consolation in any case, either from thinking how forcibly a sudden sickness breaks the chain which binds him to the world, or how gently a gradual decay unites it. He will feel and acknowledge the necessity of all he suffers to wean him from life. He will admire the divine goodness which commissions the infirmities of sickness to divest the world of its enchantments, and to strip death of some of its most formidable terrors. He feels with how much less reluctance we quit a body exhausted by suffering than one in the vigor of health.

Sickness, instead of narrowing the heart, its worst effect on an unrenewed mind, enlarges his. He earnestly ex-
horts those around him to defer no act of repentance, no labor of love, no deed of justice, no work of mercy, to that state of incapacity in which he now lies.

How many motives has the Christian to restrain his murmurs! Murmuring offends God both as it is injurious to his goodness and as it perverts the occasion which God has now afforded for giving an example of patience. Let us not complain that we have nothing to do in sickness, when we are furnished with the opportunity as well as called to the duty of resignation; the duty indeed is always ours, but the occasion is now more eminently given. Let us not say even in this depressed state that we have nothing to be thankful for. If sleep be afforded, let us acknowledge the blessing; if wearisome nights be our portion, let us remember they are "appointed to us." Let us mitigate the grievance of watchfulness by considering it as a sort of prolongation of life; as the gift of more minutes granted for meditation and prayer. If we are not able to employ it to either of these purposes, there is a fresh occasion for exercising that resignation which will be accepted for both.

If reason be continued, yet with sufferings too intense for any religious duty, the sick Christian may take comfort that the business of life was accomplished, before the sickness began. He will not be terrified if duties are superseded, if means are at an end, for he has nothing to do but to die.—This is the act for which all other acts, all other duties, all other means, will have been preparing him. He who has long been habituated to look death in the face, who has often anticipated the agonies of dissolving nature; who has accustomed himself to pray for support under them, will now feel the blessed effect of those petitions which have long been treasured in heaven. To those anticipatory prayers he may perhaps now owe the humble confidence of hope in this inevitable hour. Habituated to the contemplation, he will not, at least, have the dreadful additions of surprise and novelty to aggravate the trying scene. It has long been familiar to his mind, though hitherto it could only operate with the inferior force of a picture to a reality. He will not however have so much scared his imagination by the terrors of death, as invigorated his spirit by looking beyond them to the blessedness which follows. Faith will not so much dwell on the opening grave as shoot forward to the glories to which it leads. The hope of heaven will soften the pangs which lie in the
way to it. On heaven then he will fix his eyes rather than on the awful intervening circumstances. He will not dwell on the struggle which is for a moment, but on the crown which is for ever. He will endeavor to think less of death than of its conqueror; less of the grave than of its spoiler; less of the body in ruins than of the spirit in glory; less of the darkness of his closing day than of the opening dawn of immortality. In some brighter moments, when viewing his eternal redemption drawing nigh, as if the freed spirit had already burst its prison walls, as if the manumission had actually taken place, he is ready exultingly to exclaim, "my soul is escaped, the snare is broken, and I am delivered."

If he ever inclines to wish for recovery, it is only that he may glorify God by his future life, more than he has done by the past; but as he knows the deceitfulness of his heart, he is not certain that this would be the case, and he therefore does not wish to live. Yet should he be restored, he humbly resolves, in a better strength than his own, to dedicate his life to the restorer.

But he suffers not his thoughts to dwell on life. Reflections are at an end. His prospects as to this world are at an end also. He commits himself unreservedly to his Heavenly Father. But though secure of the port, he may still dread the passage. The Christian will rejoice that his rest is at hand, the man may shudder at the unknown transit. If faith is strong, nature is weak. Nay in this awful exigence strong faith is sometimes rendered faint through the weakness of nature.

At the moment when his faith is looking round for every additional confirmation, he may rejoice in those blessed certainties, those glorious realizations which scripture affords. He may take comfort that the strongest attestations given by the apostles to the reality of the heavenly state were not conjectural. They, to use the words of our Savior, spake what they knew and testified what they had seen. "I reckon," says St. Paul, "that the afflictions of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed." He said this after he had been caught up into the third heaven; after he had beheld the glories to which he alludes. The author of the apocalyptic vision having described the ineffable glories of the new Jerusalem, thus puts new life and power into his description.—"I John saw these things, and heard them."
The power of distinguishing objects increases with our approach to them. The Christian feels that he is entering on a state where every care will cease, every fear vanish, every desire be fulfilled, every sin be done away, every grace perfected. Where there will be no more temptations to resist, no more passions to subdue; no more insensibility to mercies, no more deadness in service, no more wandering in prayer, no more sorrows to be felt for himself, nor tears to be shed for others. He is going where his devotion will be without languor, his love without alloy, his doubts certainty, his expectation enjoyment, his hope fruition. All will be perfect, for God will be all in all.

From God he knows that he shall derive immediately all his happiness. It will no longer pass through any of those channels which now sully its purity. It will be offered him through no second cause which may fail, no intermediate agent which may deceive, no uncertain medium which may disappoint. The felicity is not only certain, but perfect,—not only perfect, but eternal.

As he approaches the land of realities, the shadows of this earth cease to interest or mislead him. The films are removed from his eyes. Objects are stripped of their false lustre. Nothing that is really little any longer looks great. The mists of vanity are dispersed. Every thing which is to have an end appears small, appears nothing. Eternal things assume their proper magnitude,—for he beholds them in the true point of vision. He has ceased to lean on the world, for he has found it both a reed and a spear; it has failed and it has pierced him. He leans not on himself, for he has long known his weakness. He leans not on his virtues, for they can do nothing for him. Had he no better refuge he feels that his sun would set in darkness; his life close in despair.

But he knows in whom he has trusted, and therefore knows not what he should fear. He looks upward with holy but humble confidence to that Great Shepherd, who having long since conducted him into green pastures, having by his rod corrected, and by his staff supported him, will, he humbly trusts, guide him through the dark valley of the shadow of death, and safely land him on the peaceful shores of everlasting rest.
St. Paul hath furnished us with so rich a variety of moral and spiritual precepts, subordinate to the general laws of piety and virtue, that out of them might well be compiled a body of ethics, or system of precepts de officiis, in truth and completeness far excelling those which any philosophy hath been able to devise or deliver.—Dr. Barrow.
PREFACE.

It is with no little diffidence that the writer of the following pages ventures to submit them to the public eye. She comes "in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling." She is fully aware, that whoever pretends to institute an inquiry into the character, and especially into the writings, of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, in a manner at all adequate to the dignity and excellence of both, should possess many and high requisites, to which she can make out no fair title. It would, however, be entirely superfluous to insist on her incompetency to the proper execution of such a work, on her deficiencies in ancient learning, Biblical criticism, and deep theological knowledge; because the sagacity of the reader would not fail to be beforehand with her avowal, in detecting them. It may, however, serve as some apology for the boldness of the present undertaking, that these volumes are not of a critical, but of a practical nature.

On the doctrinal portion, more especially, of St. Paul's Epistles, such a multitude of admirable discourses have been composed, that to have attempted to add to their number, without reaching their excellence, would have been as unnecessary as it might have been presumptuous. On the practical part, also, much has been ably and usefully written. Dissertations, commentaries, treatises, and sermons, however, though of superior merit, have not worn out the subject; and elucidations of his writings, whether they relate to doctrine or to practice, cannot, in any point of view, be undertaken without exhibiting new proofs of those inestimable treasures they contain. They are a golden mine, in which the diligent workman, the deeper he digs, the more he will discover; the farther he examines, the more he will find. Rich veins, hitherto unheeded, will overpay his labors, will continue to pour out upon him their fresh abundance of precious ore. Even the present explorer, who had no skill to penetrate his depths, has been sometimes surprised at the opulence which lay upon the surface, and of which she had not before, perhaps, fully estimated the value.

There are, it is true, passages in the works of this great Apostle, (but they are of rare occurrence, and bear no proportion to such as are obvious,) which have been interpreted in a different and even contradictory manner by men, who, agreeing in the grand essentials of Christianity, may be allowed to differ on a few abstruse points, without any impeachment of the piety on either side. If one must be mistaken, both may be sincere. If either be wrong, both doubtless desire to be right; and, happily for mankind, we shall all be ultimately tried by a Judge, who is a searcher of the thoughts and intents of the heart; in whose sight the reciprocal exercise of Christian charity may be more acceptable than that entire uniformity of
sentiment which would supersede the occasion of its exercise. 
What I know not, teach Thou me," is a petition which even the 
wisest are not too wise to offer; and they who have preferred it 
with the most effect, are, of all others, the persons who will judge 
the most tenderly of the different views, or unintentional misconceptions, 
of the opposite party.

That contest in debate over a Christian adversary, which is 
achieved at the expense of the Christian temper, will always be 
dearly purchased; and, though a triumph so obtained may discomfit 
the opponent, it will afford no moral triumph to the conqueror.

Waving, therefore, both from disinclination and inability, whatever 
passages may be considered as controversial, the writer has 
confined herself to endeavor, though, it must be confessed, imperfectly and superficially, to bring forward St. Paul's character as a 
model for our general imitation, and his practical writings as a storehouse for our general instruction; avoiding whatever might be considered as a ground for the discussion of any point not immediately 
tending to practical utility.

It may be objected to her plan, that it is not reasonable to propose 
for general imitation, a character so highly gifted, so peculiarly circumspected,—an inspired apostle,—a devoted martyr. But it is 
the principal design of these pages,—a design which it may be 
thought is too frequently avowed in them,—to show that our common actions are to be performed, and our common trials sustained, 
in somewhat of the same spirit and temper with those high duties and those unparalleled sufferings to which St. Paul was called 
out; and that every Christian, in his measure and degree, should 
hibit somewhat of the dispositions inculcated by that religion, of 
which the apostle Paul was the brightest human example, as well 
as the most illustrious human teacher.

The writer is persuaded, that many read the Epistles of St. 
Paul with deep reverence for the station they hold in the inspired 
oracles, without considering that they are at the same time supremely excellent for their unequalled applicableness to life and manners; that many, while they highly respect the writer, think 
him too high for ordinary use. It has, therefore, been her particular object, in the present work, not indeed to diminish the dignity of the apostle, but to diminish, in one sense, the distance at which 
we are apt to hold so exalted a model; to draw him into a more in 
timate connection with ourselves; to let him down, as it were, not to our level, but to our familiarity. To induce us to resort to him, 
not only on the great demands and trying occurrences of life, but 
to bring both the writings and the conduct of this distinguished 
Saint to mix with our common concerns; to incorporate the doctrines which he teaches, the principles which he exhibits, and the precepts which he enjoins, into our ordinary habits, into our every day prac 
tice; to consider him not only as the writer who has the most ably and successfully unfolded the sublime truths of our divine religion, and as the instructor who has supplied us with the noblest system of the higher ethics, but who has even condescended to extend his code to the more minute exigences and relations of familiar life.

It will, perhaps, be objected to the writer of these pages, that 
she has shown too little method in her distribution of the parts of
her subject, and too little system in her arrangement of the whole, that she has expatiated too largely on some points, passed over others too slightly, and left many unnoticed; that she has exhibited no history of the life, and observed no regular order in her reference to the actions of the apostle. She can return no answer to these anticipated charges, but that, as she never aspired to the dignity of an expositor, so she never meant to enter into the details of the biographer.

Formed, as they are, upon the most extensive views of the nature of man, it is no wonder that the writings of St. Paul have been read with the same degree of interest, by Christians of every name, age, and nation. The principles they contain are, in good truth, absolute and universal: and whilst this circumstance renders them of general obligation, it enables us, even in the remotest generation, to judge of the skilfulness of his addresses to the understanding, and to feel the aptitude of his appeals to the heart.

To the candor of the reader,—a candor which, though perhaps she has too frequently tried, and too long solicited, she has, however, never yet failed to experience,—she commits this little work. If it should set one human being on the consideration of objects hitherto neglected, she will account that single circumstance, success;—nay, she will be reconciled even to failure, if that failure should stimulate some more enlightened mind, some more powerful pen, to supply, in a future work on the same subject, the deficiencies of which she has been guilty; to rectify the errors which she may have committed; to rescue the cause which she may have injured.

Barley-Wood, January 20, 1815.
SAINT PAUL.

CHAP. I.

Introductory remarks on the morality of Paganism, showing the necessity of the Christian Revelation.

The morality of a people necessarily partakes of the nature of their theology; and in proportion as it is founded on the knowledge of the true God, in such proportion it tends to improve the conduct of man. The meanest Christian believer has here an advantage over the most enlightened heathen philosopher; for what he knows of the nature of God, arising chiefly from what he knows of Christ, and entirely from what is revealed in Scripture, he gains from those divine sources more clear and distinct views of the Deity, than unassisted reason could ever attain; and of consequence, more correct ideas of what is required of himself, both with respect to God and man. His ideas may be mean in their expression, compared with the splendid language of the sages of antiquity; but the cause of the superiority of his conceptions is obvious. While they "go about to establish their own wisdom," he submits to the wisdom of God, as he finds it in his word. What inadequate views must the wisest pagans, though "they felt after him," have entertained of Deity, who could at best only contemplate him in his attributes of power and beneficence, whilst their highest unassisted flights could never reach the remotest conception of that incomprehensible blessing, the union of his justice and his mercy in the redemption of the world by his Son—a blessing familiar and intelligible to the most illiterate Christian.

The religion of the heathens was so deplorably bad in its principle, that it is no wonder their practice was proportionably corrupt. "Those just measures of right and wrong," says Locke, "which necessity had introduced,
which the civil laws prescribed, or philosophy recommend-
ed, *stood not on their true foundation.* They served indeed
to tie society together, and by these bands and ligaments
promoted order and convenience: but there was no divine
command to make them respected, and there will naturally
be little reverence for a law, where the legislator is not
reverenced, much less where he is not recognised. There
will also be little obedience to a law without sanctions,
where neither penalty is feared, nor reward expected.

Previous to the establishment of Christianity, philosophy
had attained to its utmost perfection, and had shown how
low was its highest standard. It had completely betrayed
its inability to effect a revolution in the minds of men.
"Human reason," says the same great authority above
quoted, "never yet, from unquestionable principles or clear
deductions, made out an entire body of the law of nature.
If a collection could be made of all the moral precepts in
the pagan world, many of which may be found in the Chris-
tian religion, that would not at all hinder, but that the
world still stood as much in need of our Saviour, and of the
morality he taught." The law of the New Testament rec-
ommends itself to our regard by its excellence, and to our
obedience by the authority of the lawgiver. Christianity,
therefore, presents not only the highest perfections, but the
surest standard of morals.

In a multitude of the noble sentences and beautiful apho-
risms of many of the heathen writers, there was indeed
a strong tone of morality. But these fine sentiments, not
flowing from any perennial source, had seldom any power-
ful effect on conduct. Our great poet has noticed this dis-
cordance between principle and practice, in his dialogue
between two great and virtuous Romans.—Cassius, who
disbelieved a future state, reproves Brutus for the inconsis-
tency between his despising temper and the doctrines of
his own stoic school:

You make no use of your philosophy,
If you give way to accidental evils.

Many of their works, in almost every species of litera-
ture, exhibit such perfection as to stretch the capacity of
the reader, while they kindle his admiration, and invest
with no inconsiderable reputation, him who is able to seize
their meaning, and to taste their beauties; so that an able
critic of their writings almost ranks with him who excels in
original composition. In like manner the lives of their
great men abound in splendid sayings, as well as heroic
virtues, to such a degree as to exalt our idea of the human
intellect, and, in single instances, of the human character. We say, in single instances, for their idea of a perfect character wanted consistency, wanted completeness. It had many constituent parts, but there was no whole which comprised them. The moral fractions made up no integral The virtuous man thought it no derogation from his virtue to be selfish, the conqueror to be revengeful, the philosopher to be arrogant, the injured to be unforgiving: forbearance was cowardice, humility was baseness, meekness was pusillanimity. Not only their justice was stained with cruelty, but the most cruel acts of injustice were the road to a popularity which immortalized the perpetrator.—The good man was his own centre. Their virtues wanted to be drawn out of themselves, and this could not be the case As their goodness did not arise from any knowledge, so it could not spring from any imitation of the Divine perfections. That inspiring principle, the love of God, the vital spark of all religion, was a motive of which they had not so much as heard; and if they had, it was a feeling which it would have been impossible for them to cherish, since some of the best of their deities were as bad as the worst of themselves.

When the history of their own religion contained little more than the quarrels and the intrigues of these deities, could we expect that the practice of the people would be much better, or more consistent than their belief? If the divinities were at once holy and profligate, shall we wonder if the adoration was at once devout and impure? The worshipper could not commit a crime but he might vindicate it by the example of some deity; he could not gratify a sinful appetite, of which his religion did not furnish a justification.

Besides this, all their scattered documents of virtue could never make up a body of morals. They wanted a connecting tie.—The doctrines of one school were at variance with those of another. Even if they could have clubbed their opinions and picked out the best from each sect, so as to have patched up a code, still the disciples of one sect would not have submitted to the leader of another; the system would have wanted a head, or the head would have wanted authority, and the code would have wanted sanctions.

And as there was no governing system, so there was no universal rule of morals, for morality was different in different places.—In some countries people thought it no more a crime to expose their own children than in others to adopt those of their neighbor.—The Persians were not
looked upon as the worse moralists for marrying their
mothers, nor the Hyrcanians for not marrying at all, nor
the Sogdians for murdering their parents, nor the Scythians
for eating their dead. *

The best writers seldom made use of arguments drawn
from future blessedness to enforce their moral instruction.
Excellently as they discoursed on the beauty of virtue,
their disquisitions generally seemed to want a motive and
an end. Did not such a state of comfortless ignorance, of
spiritual degradation, of moral depravity, emphatically call
for a religion which should "bring life and immortality to
light?" Did it not imperatively require that Spirit which
should "reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of
judgment?" Did it not pant for that blood of Christ which
cleanseth from all sin.

Even those fine theorists who have left us beautiful re-
fections on the Divine nature, have bequeathed no rule
for his worship, no direction for his service, no injunctions
to obey him; they have given us little encouragement to
virtue, and no alleviation to sorrow but the impracticable
injunction, not to feel it. The eight short beatitudes in
the 5th of St. Matthew convey not only more promises
to virtue, and more consolation to sufferers, but more ap-
propriate promise to the individual grace, more specific
comfort to the specific suffering, than are to be found in all
the ancient tomes of moral discipline.

Those who were invested with a sacred character, and
who delivered the pretended sense of the oracles, talked
much of the gods, but said little of goodness; while the
philosophers who, though they were professors of wisdom,
were, not generally to the vulgar, teachers of morals,
seldom gave the Deity a place in their ethics. Between
these conflicting instructors the people stood little chance of
acquiring any just notions of moral rectitude. They were
indeed under a necessity of attending the worship of the
temples, they believed that the neglect of this duty would
offend the gods; but in their attendance they were neither
taught that purity of heart, nor that practical virtue, which
might have been supposed likely to please them. The
philosophers, if they were disposed to give the people some
rules of duty, were outmatched by the priests, who knew
they should gratify them more by omitting what they so
little relished. As to the people themselves, they did not
desire to be better than the priests wished to make them.

* Plutarch relates, that Alexander, after conquering these countries, had
reformed some of their evil habits.
They found processions pleasanter than prayers, ceremonies cheaper than duties, and sacrifices easier than self-denials, with the additional recommendation, that the one made amends for the want of the other.*

When a violent plague raged in Rome, the method they took for appeasing the deities, and putting a stop to the distemper, was the establishment of a theatre and the introduction of plays. The plague, however, having no dramatic taste, continued to rage. But neither the piety nor ingenuity of the suppliants was exhausted. A nail driven into the temple of Jupiter was found to be a more promising expedient. But the gods being as hard as the metal of which the expiation was made, were no more moved by the nail, than the plague had been by the theatrical exhibition; though the event was thought of sufficient importance for the creation of a dictator!—What progress had reason, to say nothing of religion, made in the first metropolis in the world, when a nail or a play was thought a rational expedient for pacifying the gods and stopping the pestilence. Nor does reason, mere human reason, seem to have grown wiser in her age. During the late attempt to establish heathenism in a neighboring country, does it not look as if the thirty theatres which were opened every night in its capital in the early part of the revolution, had been intended, in imitation of the Romans, whose religion, titles, and offices, the French affected to adopt, as a nightly expiation to the goddess of reason for the cruelties and carnage of the day?

Whatever conjectural notions some of the wise might entertain of a future state, the people at large could only acquire the vague and comfortless ideas of it, which might be picked up from the poets. This indefinite belief, immersed in fable, and degraded by the grossest superstition, added as little to the piety as to the happiness of mankind. The intimations of their Tartarus, and their Elysian fields, were so connected with fictions, as to convey to the mind no other impression, but that they were fictions themselves. Such uncertain glimmerings of such a futurity could afford neither warning nor encouragement, neither cheerful hope, nor salutary fear. They might amuse the mind, but never could influence the conduct. They might gratify the imagination, but could not communicate "a hope full of immortality." They neither animated the pious, nor succored the tempted, nor supported the afflicted, nor cheered the dying.

* See Locke on the Reasonableness of Christianity.
The study of their mythology could carry with it nothing but corruption. It neither intended to bring glory to God, nor peace and good will, much less salvation, to men. It was invented to embellish the fabulous periods of their history, to flatter illustrious families, by celebrating the human exploits of their deified progenitors: and thus to give an additional and national interest to their bewitching fables. What a system did those countries uphold, when the more probable way to make the people virtuous, was to keep them ignorant of religion!—when the best way to teach them their duty to man, was to keep their duties out of sight!

It is indeed but justice to acknowledge, the most of the different schools of philosophy held some one great truth. Aristotle maintained the existence of a first cause; Cicero, in opposition to the disciples of Epicurus, acknowledged a superintending Providence. Many of the stoics were of opinion, that the consummation of all things would be effected by fire. Yet every philosopher, however rational in many parts of his system, not only adopted some absurdity himself, but wove it into his code. One believed that the soul was only a vapor, which was transmuted from body to body, and was to expiate, in the shape of a brute, the sins it had committed under that of a man. Another affirmed that the soul was a material substance, and that matter was endowed with the faculties of thought and reason. Others imagined every star to be a god. Some denied not only a superintending, but a creating Providence: insisting that the world was made, without any plan or contrivance, by a fortuitous conourse of certain particles of matter; and that the members of the human body were not framed for the several purposes to which they have been accidentally applied. One affirmed the eternity of the world; another, that we can be certain of nothing,—that even our own existence is doubtful.

A religion so absurd, which had no basis even in probability and no attraction but what it borrowed from a preposterous fancy, could not satisfy the deep thinking philosopher; a philosophy abstruse and metaphysical was not sufficiently accommodated to general use to suit the people. Lactantius, on the authority of Plato, relates, that Socrates declared there was no such thing as human wisdom. In short, all were dissatisfied. The wise had a vague desire for religion which comprehended great objects, and had noble ends in view. The people stood in need of a religion which should bring relief to human wants, and consolation to human miseries. They wanted a simple way, propor-
tioned to their comprehension; a short way, proportioned to their leisure; a living way, which would give light to the conscience and support to the mind; a way founded, not on speculation, but evidence, which should carry con-
version to the heart as well as conviction to the under-
standing. Such a religion God was preparing for them in the Gospel of his Son. Christianity was calculated to supply the exigences both of the Greeks and of the bar-
barians; but the former, though they more acknowledged
their want, more slowly welcomed the relief; while the latter, though they less felt the one, more readily accepted the other.

Alexander, though he had the magnanimity to declare to his illustrious preceptor, that he had rather excel in knowledge than in power, yet blamed him for divulging to the world those secrets in learning, which he wished to confine exclusively to themselves. How would he have been offended with the Christian philosophy, which, though it has mysteries for all, has no secrets for any! How would he have been offended with that bright hope of glory, which would have displayed itself in the same efful-
gence to his meanest soldier, as to the conqueror of Persia!

But how would both the monarch and the philosopher have looked on a religion, which after kindling their curios-
ity, by intimating it had greater things to bestow than learn-
ing and empire, should dash their high hopes, by making these great things consist in poverty of spirit, in being little in their own eyes, in not loving the world, nor the things of the world.

But what would they have said to a religion which placed human intellect in an inferior degree in the scale of God's gifts; and even degraded it from thence, when not used to his glory? What would they have thought of a religion, which, so far from being sent exclusively to the conqueror in arms, or the leaders in science, frankly declared at its outset, that "not many mighty, not many noble were call-
ed," which professed, while it filled the hungry with good things, to send the rich empty away?

Yet that mysterious Hope which Alexander declared was all he kept for himself, when he profusely scattered king-
doms among his favorites,—those ambiguous tears which he shed, because he had no more worlds to conquer; that deeply felt, but ill understood hope, those undefined and un-
intelligible tears, mark a profounder feeling of the vanity of this world, a more fervent panting after something bet-
ter than power or knowledge, a more heart-felt "longing
after immortality," than almost any express language which philosophy has recorded.

"Learn of me" would have been thought a dignified exordium for the founder of a new religion by the masters of the Grecian schools. But when they came to the humbling motive of the injunction, "for I am meek and lowly in heart," how would their expectations have been damped? They would have thought it an abject declaration from the lips of a great teacher, unless they had understood that grand paradox of Christianity, that lowliness of heart was among the highest attainments to be made by a rational creature.

When they had heard the beginning of that animating interrogation,—Where is the wise? Where is the disputer of this world? methinks I behold the whole portico and academy emulously rush forward at an invitation so alluring, at a challenge so personal; but how instinctively would they have shrunk back at the repulsive question which succeeds;—Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? Yet would not Christianity, well understood and faithfully received, have taught these exalted spirits, that, to look down upon what is humanly great, is a loftier attainment than to look up to it?

Would it not have carried a sentiment to the heart of Alexander, a system to the mind of Aristotle, which their respective, though differently pursued, careers of ambition, utterly failed of furnishing to either?

Reason, even by those who possessed it in the highest perfection, as it gave no adequate view even of natural religion, so it made no adequate provision for correct morals. The attempt appears to have been above the reach of human powers. "God manifested in the flesh,"—He who was not only true, but The Truth, and who taught the truth as "one having authority,"—was alone competent to this great work. The duty of submission to divine power was to the multitude more intelligible, than the intricate deductions of reason. That God is, and is a rewarder of them that seek him; that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, make a compendious summary both of natural and revealed religion; they are propositions which carry their own explanation, disentangled from those trains of argument, which, as few could have been brought to comprehend, perhaps it was the greatest wisdom in the philosopher never to have proposed them.

The most skilful dialectician could only reason on known principles; but without the superinduction of revealed religion, he could only, with all his efforts, and they have been
prodigious, furnish "rules," but not "arms." Logic is indeed a powerful weapon to fence, but not to fight with; that which is a conqueror in the schools is impotent in the field. It is powerful to refute a sophism, but weak to repel a temptation. It may defeat an opponent made up like itself of pure intellect; but is no match for so substantial an assailant as moral evil. It yields to the onset, when the antagonists are furious passions and headstrong appetites. It can make a successful thrust against an opinion, but is too feeble to "pull down the strong holds of sin and Satan."

If, through the strength of human corruption, the restraining power of divine grace is still too frequently resisted,—if the offered light of the Holy Spirit is still too frequently quenched, what must have been the state of mankind, when that grace was not made known, when that light was not fully revealed, when "darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people?" But under the clear illumination of evangelical truth, every precept becomes a principle, every argument a motive, every direction a duty, every doctrine a law; and why? Because thus saith the Lord.

Christianity, however, is not merely a religion of authority; the soundest reason embraces most confidently what the most explicit revelation has taught, and the deepest inquirer is usually the most convinced Christian. The reason of philosophy, is a disputing reason, that of Christianity, an obeying reason. The glory of the pagan religion consisted in virtuous sentiments, the glory of the Christian in the pardon and the subjugation of sin. The humble Christian may say with one of the ancient fathers,—I will not glory because I am righteous, but because I am redeemed.

CHAP. II.


Among the innumerable evidences of the truth of Christianity, there is one of so rare and extraordinary a nature, as might of itself suffice to carry conviction to the mind of every unprejudiced inquirer, even if this proof were not accompanied by such a cloud of concurring testimonies.

The sacred volume is composed by a vast variety of writers, men of every different rank and condition, of every diversity of character and turn of mind: the monarch and
the plebeian, the illiterate and the learned, the foremost in
talent and the moderately gifted in natural advantages, the
historian and the legislator, the orator and the poet.—each
had his immediate vocation, each his peculiar province: some
prophets, some apostles, some evangelists, living in ages re-
mote from each other, under different modes of civil govern-
ment, under different dispensations of the divine economy,
filling a period of time which reached from the first dawn of
heavenly light to its meridian radiance. The Old Testa-
ment and the New, the law and the gospel; the prophets
predicting events, and the evangelists recording them; the
doctrinal yet didactic epistolary writers, and he who closed
the sacred canon in the apocalyptic vision;—all these fur-
nished their respective portions, and yet all tally with a
dove-tailed correspondence; all the different materials are
joined with a completeness the most satisfactory, with an
agreement the most incontrovertible.

This instance of uniformity without design, of agreement
without contrivance; this consistency maintained through a
long series of ages, without a possibility of the ordinary
methods for conducting such a plan; these unparalleled con-
gruities, these unexampled coincidences, form altogether a
species of evidence, of which there is no other instance in
the history of all the other books in the world.

All these variously gifted writers here enumerated, concur
in this grand peculiarity, that all have the same end in view,
all are pointing to the same object, all, without any project-
ed collusion, are advancing the same scheme; each brings
in his several contingent, without any apparent consideration
how it may unite with the portions brought by other contri-
butors, without any spirit of accommodation, without any
visible intention to make out a case, without indeed any
actual resemblance, more than that every separate portion
being derived from the same spring, each must be governed
by one common principle, and that principle being truth
itself, must naturally and consentaneously produce assimi-
lation, conformity, agreement. What can we conclude
from all this, but what is indeed the inevitable conclusion,
—a conclusion which forces itself on the mind, and com-
pels the submission of the understanding; that all this,
under differences of administration, is the work of one and
the same great, omniscient, and eternal spirit.

If, however, from the general uniformity of plan visible,
throughout the whole sacred canon, results one of the most
cogent and complete arguments for its divine original, oth-
ers will also rise from its mode of execution, its peculiar
diversities, and some other circumstances attending it, not so easily brought under one single point of view.—Does it not look as if almighty wisdom refused to divide the glory of his revelation with man, when, passing by the shining lights of the pagan world, He chose, in the promulgation of the Gospel, to make use of men of ordinary endowments, men possessing the usual defects and prejudices of persons so educated and so circumstanced? Not only the other immediate followers, but even the biographers of Christ, were persons of no distinguished abilities. Integrity was almost their sole, as it were the most requisite qualification. On this point it is not too much to maintain, that the writings of each of these men are not only so consistent with each other, but also with themselves, as to offer, individually, as well as aggregately, a proof of their own veracity, as well as of the truth itself.

Had they, however, all recorded uniformly the same more inconsiderable particulars; had there not been that natural diversity, that incidental variation, observable in all other historians;—had not one preserved passages which the others overlooked, some recording more of the actions of Jesus, others treasuring up more of his discourses; some particularizing the circumstances of his birth; others only referring to it as a fact not requiring fresh authentication; another again plainly adverting to it by "the Word that was made flesh, and dwelt among us;" and adding a new circumstance by citing the testimony of the Baptist to "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world;"—in short, had there been in the several relations not mere consistency, but positive identity, then, not only the fidelity of the writers would have been questionable, and concert and design justly have been suspected, but we should in effect have had only the testimony of one Gospel instead of four.

But to pass to other evidences of truth.—The manner in which these writers speak of themselves, is at once a proof of their humility and of their veracity. The conversion of St. Matthew is slightly related by himself and in the most modest terms. He simply says, speaking in the third person; "Jesus saw a man named Matthew, and saith unto him, Follow me: and he arose and followed him; and as Jesus sat at meat in the house, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him." Not a word is said of a sacrifice so honorable to himself, and so generously recorded by St. Luke in those words, he left all, and followed him; not a word of the situation he renounced at the first call of the

* Matthew, ch. 9.
Master, and which appears to have been lucrative from "the great feast he made for him in his own house, and the great company of publicans and others who sat down with him."* St. Luke relates only his hospitality; St. Matthew, as if to abase himself the more, describes only the sinners which made up his society previous to his conversion.

These sober recorders of events the most astonishing, are never carried away, by the circumstances they relate, into any pomp of diction, into any use of superlatives. There is not, perhaps, in the whole Gospel a single interjection, nor an exclamation, not any artifice to call the reader's attention to the marvels of which the relatours were the witnesses. Absorbed in their holy task, no alien idea presents itself to their mind: the object before them fills it. They never digress, are never called away by the solicitations of vanity, or the suggestions of curiosity. No image starts up to divert their attention. There is indeed, in the Gospels, much imagery, much allusion, much allegory, but they proceed from their Lord, and are recorded as his. The writers never fill up the intervals between events. They leave circumstances to make their own impression, instead of helping out the reader by any reflections of their own. They always feel the holy ground on which they stand. They preserve the gravity of history and the severity of truth, without enlarging the outline or swelling the expression.

The evanglistists all agree in this most unequivocal character of veracity, that of criminating themselves. They record their own errors and offences with the same simplicity with which they relate the miracles and sufferings of their Lord. Indeed their dulness, mistakes and failings are so intimately blended with his history, by their continual demands upon his patience and forbearance, as to make no inconsiderable or unimportant part of it.

This fidelity is equally amiable both in the composition, and in the preservation of the Old Testament, a book which every where testifies against those whose history it contains, and not seldom against the relatours themselves. The author of the Pentateuch proclaims, in the most pointed terms, the ingratitude of the chosen people towards God. He prophesies that they will go on filling up the measure of their offences, calls heaven and earth to witness against them that he has delivered his own soul, declares that as they have worshipped gods which were no gods, God will punish them by calling a people who were no people. Yet this book, so disgraceful to their national character, this

* St. Luke, ch. 5.
register of their own offences, they would rather die than lose. "This," says the admirable Pascal, "is an instance of integrity which has no example in the world, no root in nature." In the Pentateuch and the Gospel, therefore, these parallel, these unequalled instances of sincerity, are incontrovertible proofs of the truth of both.

It is obvious that the impression which was to be made should owe nothing to the skill, but every thing to the veracity of the writers. They never tried to improve upon the doctrines or the requirements of their Master, by mixing their own wisdom with them. Though their views were not clear, their obedience was implicit. It was not, however, a mere mechanical obedience, but an undisputing submission to the divine teaching. Even at the glorious scene of the transfiguration, their amazement did not get the better of their fidelity. There was no vain impatience to disclose the wonders which had passed, and of which they had been allowed the honor of being witnesses. Though they inserted it afterwards in their narrations, "they, as they were commanded, kept it close, and told no man in those days what they had seen."

The simplicity of the narrative is never violated; there is even no panegyric on the august person they commemorate, not a single epithet of commendation. When they mention an extraordinary effect of his divine eloquence, it is history, not eulogy, that speaks. They say nothing of their own admiration; it is "the people who were astonished at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." Again, it was "the multitudes marvelled, saying, it was never so seen in Israel." Again, it was the officers, not the writer, who said, "never man spake like this man."

In recording the most stupendous events, we are never called to an exhibition of their own pity, or their own admiration. In relating the most soul-moving circumstance, there is no attempt to be pathetic, no aim to work up the feelings of the reader, no appeal to his sympathy, no studied finish, no elaborate excitement. Jesus wept;—no comment. He is hungry;—no compassion escapes them. He is transfigured;—no expression of astonishment. He is agonized;—the narrative does not rise in emphasis. He is betrayed;—no execration to the betrayer. He is condemned;—no animadversions on the iniquitous judge; while their own denial and desertion are faithfully recorded. He expires;—no remark on the tremendous catastrophe, no display of their own sorrow. Facts alone supply the void; and what facts? The earth quakes, the sun is eclipsed,
the graves give up their dead. In such a history, it is very true, fidelity was praise, fact was glory. And yet, if, on the one hand, there were no need of the rhetorician's art to embellish the tale, what mere rhetoricians could have abstained from using it?

Thus, it seems obvious, that unlettered men were appointed to this great work, in order that the success of the Gospel might not be suspected of owing anything to natural ability, or to splendid attainment. This arrangement, while it proves the astonishing progress of Christianity to have been caused by its own energy, serves to remove every just suspicion of the contrivance of fraud, the collusions of interest, or the artifices of invention.

Had the first apostles been men of genius, they might have injured the purity of the Gospel by bringing their ingenuity into it.—Had they been men of learning, they might have imported from the schools of Greece and Rome, each from his own sect, some of its peculiar infusions, and thus have vitiated the simplicity of the Gospel. Had they been critics and philosophers, there might have been endless debates which part of Christianity was the power of God, and which the result of man's wisdom. Thus, though corruptions soon crept into the church, yet no impurities could reach the Gospel itself. Some of its teachers became heretical, but the pure Word remained unadulterated.—However, the philosophizing or the Judaizing teachers might subsequently infuse their own errors into their own preaching, the Gospel preserved its own integrity. They might mislead their followers, but they could not deteriorate the New Testament.

It required different gifts to promulgate and to maintain Christianity. The evangelists did not so much attempt to argue the truth of the Redeemer's doctrines, as practically to prove that they were of Divine origin. If called on for a defence, they worked a miracle. If they could not produce a cogent argument, they could produce a paralytic walking. If they could not open the eyes of the prejudiced, they could open the eyes of the blind. Such attestation was to the eye-witnesses, argument the most unanswerable. The most illiterate persons could judge of this species of evidence so peculiar to Christianity. He could know whether he saw a sick man restored to life by a word, or a lame man take up his bed and walk, or one who had been dead four days, instantly obey the call—"Lazarus, come forth!" About a sentiment there might be a diversity of suffrages; about an action which all saw, all could entertain
but one opinion. The caviller might have refuted a syllogism, and a fallacy might have imposed on the multitude, but no sophistry could counteract ocular demonstration.

But as God does nothing in vain, so he never employs irrelevant instruments or superfluous means. He therefore did not see fit to be at the expense of a perpetual miracle to maintain and carry on that church which he had thought proper to establish by miraculous powers. When, therefore, the Gospel was immutably fixed on its own eternal basis, and its truth unimpeachably settled by the authentic testimony of so many eye witnesses to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus; a writer was brought forward, contemporary, but not connected, with them. Not only was he not confederate with the first institutes of Christianity; but so implacably hostile was he to them, that he had assisted at the death of the first martyr.

As the attestation of one notorious enemy in favor of a cause, is considered equivalent to that of many friends; thus did this distinguished adversary seem to be raised up to confirm and ratify all the truths he had so furiously opposed; to become the most able advocate of the cause he had repudiated, the most powerful champion of the Saviour he had vilified. He was raised up to unfold more at large those doctrines which could not be so explicitly developed in the historical portions, while an immediate revelation from heaven supplied to him the actual opportunities and advantages which the evangelists had enjoyed. Nothing short of such a divine communication could have placed St. Paul on a level with the other apostles; had he been taught of man, he must have been inferior to those who were taught of Jesus.

For St. Paul had not the honor to be the personal disciple of his Lord. His conversion and preaching were subsequent to the illumination of the Gospel; an intimation possibly, that though revelation and human learning should not be considered as sharing between them the work of spiritual instruction, yet that human learning might henceforward become a valuable adjunct, and a most suitable, though subordinate accessory in maintaining the cause of that divine truth which it had no hand in establishing.

The ministry of Paul was not to be circumscribed, as that of his immediate precursors had been, by the narrow limits of the Jewish church. As he was designated to be the Apostle of the Gentiles, as he was to bear his testimony before rulers and scholars; as he was to carry his mission into the presence of "kings, and not to be ashamed,"—it pleased Infinite Wisdom, which always fits the instrument to the
work, and the talent to the exigence, to accommodate most exactly the endowments of Paul to the demands that would be made upon them; and as divine Providence caused Moses to acquire in Egypt the learning which was to prepare him for the legislator of a people so differently circumstanced, it pleased the same Infinite Wisdom to convey to Paul, through the mouth of a Jewish teacher, the knowledge he was to employ for the Gentiles, and to adapt his varied acquirements to the various ranks, characters, prejudices, and local circumstances of those before whom he was to advovate the noblest cause ever assigned to man.

Of all these providential advantages he availed himself with a wisdom, aptness, and appropriateness, without a parallel;—a wisdom derived from that divine spirit which guided all his thoughts, words, and actions: and with a teachableness which demonstrated that he was never disobedient to the heavenly vision.

Indeed it seemed necessary, in order to demonstrate that the principles of Christianity are not unattainable, nor its precepts impracticable, that the New Testament should, in some part, present to us a full exemplification of its doctrines and of its spirit; that they should, to produce their practical effect, be embodied in a form purely human,—for the character of the founder of its religion is deified humanity. Did the Scriptures present no such exhibition, infidelity might have availed itself of the omission, for the purpose of asserting that Christianity was only a bright chimera, a beautiful fiction of the imagination; and Plato's fair idea might have been brought into competition with the doctrines of the Gospel. But in St. Paul is exhibited a portrait which not only illustrates its divine truth, but establishes its moral efficacy; a portrait entirely free from any distortion in the drawing, from any extravagance in the coloring.

It is the representation of a man struggling with the sins and infirmities natural to man; yet habitually triumphing over them by that divine grace which had first rescued him from prejudice, bigotry, and unbelief.—It represents him resisting, not only such temptations as are common to men, but surmounting trials to which no other man was ever called; furnishing in his whole practice not only an instructor, but a model; showing every where in his writings, that the same offers, the same supports, the same victories, are tendered to every suffering child of mortality,—that the waters of eternal life are not restricted to prophets and apostles, but are offered freely to every one that thirsteth,—offered without money and without price.
CHAP. III.


Can the reader of taste and feeling, who has followed the much enduring hero of the Odyssey with growing delight and increasing sympathy, though in a work of fiction, through all his wanderings, peruse with inferior interest the genuine voyages of the Apostle of the Gentiles over nearly the same seas? The fabulous adventurer, once landed, and safe on the shores of his own Ithaca, the reader's mind is satisfied, for the object of his anxiety is at rest. But not so ends the tale of the Christian hero. Whoever closed St. Luke's narrative of the diversified events of St. Paul's travels; whoever accompanied him with the interest his history demands, from the commencement of his trials at Damascus to his last deliverance from shipwreck, and left him preaching in his own hired house at Rome, without feeling as if he had abruptly lost sight of some one very dear to him, without sorrowing that they should see his face no more, without indulging a wish that the intercourse could have been carried on to the end, though that end were martyrdom.

Such readers, and perhaps only such, will rejoice to renew their acquaintance with this very chiefest of the apostles; not indeed in the communication of subsequent facts, but of important principles; not in the records of the biographer, but in the doctrines of the saint. In fact, to the history of Paul in the sacred oracles succeed his Epistles. And these Epistles, as if through design, open with that "to the beloved of God called to be saints" in that very city, the mention of his residence in which concludes the preceding narrative.

Had the sacred canon closed with the evangelical narrations, had it not been determined in the counsels of divine wisdom, that a subsequent portion of inspired Scripture in another form, should have been added to the historical portions, that the epistles should have conveyed to us the results of the mission and the death of Christ, how immense would have been the disadvantage, and how irreparable the loss: may we presume to add, how much less perfect would have been our view of the scheme of Christianity, had the New Testament been curtailed of this important portion of religious and practical instruction.
We should indeed have felt the same adoring gratitude for the benefits of the Redeemer, but we should have been in comparative ignorance of the events consequent upon his resurrection. We should have been totally at a loss to know how and by whom the first Christian churches were founded; how they were conducted, and what was their progress. We should have had but a slender notion of the manner in which Christianity was planted, and how wonderfully it flourished in the heathen soil. Above all, we should have been deprived of that divine instruction, equally the dictate of the Holy Spirit, with which the epistles abound; or, which would have been worse than ignorance, uninspired men, fanatics, or impostors would have attached to the Gospel their glosses, conceits, errors, and misinterpretations.—We should have been turned over for information to some of those spurious gospels, and more than doubtful epistles, of which mention is made in the early part of ecclesiastical history. What attempts might have been made by such writers, to amuse curiosity with a sequel of the history of the persons named in the New Testament! How might they have misled us by unprofitable details of the Virgin Mary, or of Joseph of Arimathea!

What legends might have been invented, what idolatry even might have been incorporated with the true worship of God; what false history appended to the authentic record! Not only is the divine Wisdom manifest in carrying on through the epistles a confirmation of the Spirit and power of Christianity, but the same design is no less apparent in closing the book with the Apocalypse,—a writing which contains the testimony of the last surviving disciple of Jesus in extreme old age, to which he seems to have been providentially preserved for the very purpose of protecting the Gospel from innovations which were beginning to corrupt it.

The narratives of the Evangelists would indeed have remained perfect in themselves, even without the epistles; but never could its truths have been so clearly understood, or its doctrines so fully developed, as they now are. Our Saviour himself intimated, that there would be a more full and complete knowledge of his doctrines, after he had ceased to deliver them, than there was at the time. How indeed could the doctrine of the atonement, and of pardon through his blood, have been so explicitly set forth during his life, as they afterwards were in the epistles, especially in those of St. Paul?

referring the friend to whom he inscribes it, to his "former treatise of all that Jesus began to do, and to teach, till he was taken up, after that he had through the Holy Ghost given commandment to the Apostles" seems plainly to indicate that the doing and the teaching were to be carried on by them. All their doubts were at length removed. They had now a plenary conviction of the divinity of Christ's person, and of the dignity of his mission. They had now witnessed his glorious resurrection and ascension, and the coming of the Holy Ghost. They had attained the fullest assurance of the truths they were to proclaim, and had had time to acquire the completest certainty of their moral efficacy on the heart and life.

It was therefore ordained by that Wisdom which cannot err, that the apostles, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, should work up all the doctrines of the anterior Scriptures into a more systematic form:—that they should more fully unfold their doctrines, extract the essence of their separate maxims, collect the scattered rays of spiritual light into a focus; and blend the whole into one complete body.

The epistles, therefore, are an inestimable appendix to the evangelists. The memoir, which contains the actions of the apostles, the work of an evangelist also, stands between these two portions of the New Testament. Thus, no chasm is left, and the important events which this connecting link supplies—particularly the descent of the Holy Spirit, the emblematic vision of St. Peter, and the conversion and apostleship of St. Paul,—naturally prepare the mind for that full and complete commentary on the historical books, which the epistles, more especially those of St. Paul, present to us.

St. Paul was favored with a particular revelation, a personal disclosure to him of the truths with which the other disciples were previously acquainted. This special distinction placed Paul on a level with his precursors. Though, in point of fact, he added nothing to the Gospel revelation, and in point of doctrine he only gave a larger exposition of truths previously communicated, of duties already enjoined, yet here was the warrant of his teaching, the broad seal of his apostleship. And unless we fall into the gross error of insisting that the epistles in general would not equally be given by inspiration with other parts of the New Testament, I see not how any can withhold, from the epistles of St. Paul in particular, that reverence which they profess to entertain for the entire letter of revelation.
It is a hardship to which all writers on subjects exclusively religious are liable, that if, while they are warmly pressing some great and important point, they omit at the same time, to urge some other point of great moment also, which they equally believe, but which they cannot in that connection introduce without breaking in on their immediate train of argument, they are accused of rejecting what they are obliged to overlook, though in its proper place they have repeatedly insisted upon that very truth; nay, though the whole tendency of their writings shows their equal faith in the doctrine they are said to have neglected. To this disingenuous treatment, amongst other more serious attacks upon his character, no author has been more obnoxious than the apostle Paul. It has been often intimated, that in dwelling on the efficacy of the death of Christ, he has not urged with sufficient frequency and energy the importance of Christian practice. He seems himself to have foreseen the probability of this reproach, and has accordingly provided against the consequence that would be drawn from his positions, if taken separately. It would be an endless task to cite the passages in which he is continually defending his doctrine against these anticipated misrepresentations. Among other modes of refutation, he sometimes states these false charges in the way of interrogatories: "Do we make void the law through faith?" And not contented with the solemn negative, "God forbid!" he adds a positive affirmative to the contrary: "Yea we establish the law." In a similar manner he is beforehand with his censors in denying the expected charge—"Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" and he obtests the same Almighty name to his opposite practice. Readers, of different views, are without ceasing, on the watch to take advantage of all the epistolary writers in this respect, while the fair method would surely be to form the general judgment, from the whole tenor and collective spirit of their writings.

But it has been argued with still greater boldness, that St. Paul was not a disciple.—Granted. But his miraculous conversion entitled him to the confidence, which some men more willingly place in those who were. This event is substantially recorded by St. Luke: and as if he foresaw the distrust which might hereafter arise, he has added to his first relation, in the 9th chapter of the Acts, to several reports of the same circumstance made by St. Paul himself, first to the Jews, and afterwards to Festus and Agrippa. As Luke has recorded this astonishing fact three several
times, we are not left to depend for its truth entirely on St Paul's own frequent allusions to it.

Much suspicion of this great apostle is avowedly ground ed on the remark of St. Peter, who, in adverting to his beloved brother Paul, observes, that "in his epistles are some things hard to be understood, which they who are unstable and unlearned, wrest to their own destruction." Here the critic would desire to stop, or rather to garble the sentence which adds, "as they do also the other Scriptures;" thus casting the accusation, not upon St. Paul or "the other Scriptures," but upon the misinterpreters of both. But St. Peter farther includes in the same passage, that "Paul accounts the long-suffering of God to be salvation, according to the wisdom given him." It is apparent, therefore, that though there may be more difficulty, there is not more danger in St. Paul's epistles, than in the rest of the sacred volume. Let us also observe what is the characters of these subverters of truth,—the "unstable" in principle and "unlearned" in doctrine. If, then, you feel yourself in danger of being misled, in which of these classes will you desire to enrol your name? But it is worthy of observation, that, in this supposed censure of St. Peter, we have in reality a most valuable testimony, not only to the excellence, but also to the inspiration of St. Paul's writings; for he not only ascribes their composition to the wisdom given unto him, but puts them on a par with the other Scriptures,—a double corroboration of their divine character.

This passage of St. Peter, then, is so far from impugning the character of Paul to divine inspiration, that we have here the fact itself established upon the authority of a favorite disciple and companion of Jesus. To invalidate such a testimony would be no less than to shake the pillars of revelation.

Besides, as an eminent divine has observed, "if St. Paul had been only a good man writing under that general assistance of the Spirit common to good men, it would be ascribing far too much to his compositions to suppose that the misunderstanding them could effect the destruction of the reader."

St. Peter says only, that "some things" are difficult; but are there not difficulties in every part of divine revelation, in all the operations of God, in all the dispensations of Providence; difficulties insuperable in the natural as well as the spiritual world? Difficulties in the formation of the human body; in the union of that perishable body
with its immortal companion? Is it not then probable that some difficulties in various parts of the divine oracles may be purposely left for the humiliation of pride, for the exercise of patience, for the test of submission, for the honor of faith? But allowing that in Paul some things are hard to be understood, that is no reason for rejecting such things as are easy, for rejecting all things. Why should the very large proportion that is clear, be slighted for the very small one that is obscure? Scholars do not so treat an ancient poet or historian. One or two perplexing passages, instead of shaking the credit of an author, rather whet the critic to a nearer investigation. Even if the local difficulty should prove invincible, it does not lessen the general interest excited by the work. They who compare spiritual things with spiritual, which is the true biblical criticism, must perceive that the epistolary writers do not more entirely agree with each other, than they agree with the doctrines, precepts, and promises delivered on the Mount. And as the Sermon on the Mount is an exposition of the law of Moses, so the epistles are an exposition of the law of Christ. Yet some persons discredit the one, from an exclusive veneration for the other.

But is it not so derogatory from the dignity of our Lord to disparage the epistolary discussions written under the direction of his Holy Spirit, written with a view to lay open in the clearest manner the truths he taught in the Gospel, as it would be to depreciate the facts themselves, which that Gospel records?

The more general respect for the Gospels seems partly to arise from the circumstance that they contain facts: the disregard implied for the epistles from this cause,—that they enforce doctrines. The former, the generality feel they dare not resist; the latter they think they can oppose with more impunity. But of how much less value would be the record of these astonishing facts if there were neither doctrines to grow out of them, nor precepts to be built upon them! And where should we look for the full instruction to be deduced from both, but in the commentaries of those, to whom the charge of expounding the truths previously taught was committed? Our Saviour himself has left no written record. As the Father committed all judgment to the Son, so the Son committed all written instruction to his select servants.

One of these, who had written a Gospel, wrote also three epistles. Another carried on the sequel of the evangelical history. If these men are worthy of confidence in one
instance, why not in another? Fourteen of the epistles were written by one who had an express revelation from Heaven; all the rest, the single chapter of St. Jude excepted, by the distinguished apostles who were honored with the privilege of witnessing the transfiguration of their Lord. The three epistles of St. John are only a prolonged expression of the devout feelings which breathe throughout his narrative, the same lively manifestation of the word made flesh, which shines throughout his Gospel.

In the Gospel, the doctrines and precepts are more dogmatically enjoined: in the epistles they are enforced more argumentatively. The structure of the epistle addressed to the Romans is the most systematical. All are equally consistent with each other, and with the general tenor of the antecedent Scriptures.

Does it not look as if the marked distinction which some readers make between the historical and the epistolary portions, arose from a most erroneous belief that they can more commodiously reconcile their own views, opinions, and practice, with the narratives of the Evangelists, than with the keen, penetrating, heart-exploring exposition of those very doctrines which are equally found, but not equally expanded, in the Gospels? These critical discoverers, however, may rest assured, that there is nothing more strong, nothing more pointed, nothing more unequivocally plain, nothing more awfully severe in any part of St. Paul's writings than in the discourses of our Lord himself. He would indeed have overshot his duty in the same proportion in which he had outgone his Master. Does Paul enjoin any thing more contrary to nature than the excision of a right hand, or the plucking out of a right eye? Does Paul any where exhibit a menace, I will not say more alarming, but so repeatedly alarming, as his Divine Master, who expressly, in one chapter only, the 9th of St. Mark, three several times denounces eternal punishment on the irreclaimably impenitent, awfully marking out not only the specific place, but the specific torment,—the undying worm, and the unquenched fire?

No: these scrupulous objectors add nothing to the character of our Lord, by what they subduct from that of his apostle. Perfection admits of no improvement; deity of no addition. To degrade any portion of the revealed will of God, is no proof of reverence for Him whose will is revealed. But it is preposterous to insinuate, that a regard for the epistles is calculated to diminish a regard for the Gospels. Where else can we find such believing, such
admir ing, such adoring views of him whose life the Gospel records? Where else are we so grounded in that love which passeth knowledge? Where else are we so continually taught to be looking unto Jesus? Where else are we so powerfully reminded that there is no other name under heaven by which we may be saved? We may as well assert, that the existing laws, of which Magna Charta is the original, diminish our reverence for this palladium itself; this basis of our political security, as the Gospel is of our moral and spiritual privileges. In both cases the derived benefit sends us back to the well-head from whence it flows.

He who professes to read the holy Scriptures for his "instruction," should recollect, whenever he is disposed to be captious, that they are written also for his correction. If we really believe that Christ speaks to us in the Gospels, we must believe that he speaks to us in the epistles also. In the one he addresses us in his militant, in the other in his glorified character. In one, the divine instructor speaks to us on earth; in the other, from heaven. The internal wisdom, the divinity of the doctrines, the accordance both of doctrine and precept with those delivered by the Saviour himself, the powerful and abiding effects which, for near two thousand years they have produced, and are actually producing, on the hearts and lives of multitudes; the same spirit which inspired the writer is still ready to assist the reader; all together forming, to every serious inquirer who reads them with an humble heart and a docile spirit, irre-fragable arguments, unimpeachable evidence, that they possess as full a claim to inspiration, and consequently have as forcible demand on his belief and obedience, as any of the less litigated portions of the book of God.

Whoever, then, shall sit down to the perusal of these epistles without prejudice, will not rise from it without improvement. In any human science we do not lay aside the whole, because some parts are more difficult than others: we are rather stimulated to the work by the difficulty, than deterred from it; because we believe the attainment will reward the perseverance. There is, indeed, an essential difference between a diagram and a doctrine, the apprehension of the one solely depending on the capacity and application of the student, while the understanding of the other depends not merely on the industry, but on the temper with which we apply. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, and it shall be given him."

Let any reader say, if after perusing St. Luke’s biographical sketch of the Acts of the Apostles, after contemplat-
ng the work of the Spirit of God, and its effects on the lives and the preaching of these primitive saints, whether he has not attained an additional insight into the genius and the results of Christianity since he finished reading the evangelist? Let him say further, whether the light of revelation, shining more and more as he advances, does not, in his adding the perusal of the epistles to that of the Acts, pour in upon his mental eye the full and perfect day?

As there was more leisure, as well as a more appropriate space, in the epistles for building up Christianity as a system than in the Gospels, so these wise master-builders, "building on no other foundation than that which was laid," borrowed all the materials for the glorious edifice, from the anterior Scriptures. They brought from their precursors in the immortal work, the hewn stones with which the spiritual temple is constructed, and having compacted it with that which every portion supplied; squared, rounded, and polished the precious mass into perfect form and shape into complete beauty and everlasting strength.

CHAP. IV.

St. Paul's Faith, a Practical Principle.

There are some principles and seeds of nature, some elements in the character of man, not indisposed for certain acts of virtue; we mean virtue as distinguished from the principle of pleasing God by the act or sentiment. Some persons naturally hate cruelty, others spurn at injustice, this man detests covetousness, that abhors oppression. Some of these dispositions certain minds find, and others fancy, within themselves. But for a man to go entirely out of himself, to live upon trust, to renounce all confidence in virtues which he possesses, and in actions which he performs; to cast himself entirely upon another; to seek to be justified, not by his own obedience, but by the obedience of that other; to look for eternal happiness, not from the merit of his own life, but from that of another's death, that death the most degrading, after a life the most despised; for all this revolution in the mind and heart, there is no foundation, no seed, no element in nature; it is foreign to the make of man; if possessed, it is bestowed; if felt, it is derived; it
is not a production, but an infusion; it is a principle, not indigenous, but implanted. The apostle implies that faith is not inherent, when he says, "to you it is given to believe."

This superinduced principle is faith, a principle not only not inherent in nature, but diametrically contrary to it; a principle which takes no root in the soil of the natural heart; no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost. Its result is not merely a reform, but a new life,—a life governed by the same principle which first communicated it.

The faith of mere assent, that faith which is purely a conviction of the understanding, seldom stirs beyond the point at which it first sits down. Being established on the same common ground with any scientific truth, or any acknowledged fact, it is not likely to advance, desiring nothing more than to retain its station among other accepted truths, and thus it continues to reside in the intellect alone. Though its local existence is allowed, it exhibits none of the undoubted signs of life,—activity, motion, growth.

But that vital faith with which the souls of the Scripture saints were so richly imbued, is an animating and pervading principle. It spreads and enlarges in its progress. It gathers energy as it proceeds. The more advanced are its attainments, the more prospective are its views. The nearer it approaches to the invisible realities to which it is stretching forward, the more their dominion over it increases, till it almost makes the future present, and the unseen visible. Its light becomes brighter, its flame purer, its aspirations stronger. Its increasing proximity to its object fills the mind, warms the heart, clears the sight, quickens the pace.

But as faith is of a spiritual nature, it cannot be kept alive without spiritual means. It requires for its sustenance aliment congenial with itself. Meditation familiarizes it with its object; prayer keeps it close to its end. If thus cherished by perpetual exercise, sustained by the habitual contemplation of the oracles of God, and watered with the dews of his grace, it becomes the pregnant seed of every Christian virtue.

The holy Scriptures have not left this faith to grow merely out of the stock of injunction, exhortation or command; the inspired writers have not merely expatiated on its beauty as a grace, on its necessity as a duty, on its use as an instrument, but having infused it as a living and governing principle, have fortified their exhortations with instances the most striking, have illustrated their definitions with examples the most impressive.
The most indefatigable but rational champion of faith is the apostle Paul. He everywhere demonstrates, that it is not a speculative dogma remaining dormant in the mind, but a lively conviction of the power and goodness of God, and of his mercy in Christ Jesus; a principle received into the heart, acknowledged by the understanding, and operating on the practice.

St. Paul, among the other sacred authors, seems to consider that faith is to the soul, what the senses are to the body; it is spiritual sight. God is the object, faith is the visual ray. Christ is the substance, faith is the hand which lays hold on it. By faith the promises are in a manner substantiated. Our Saviour does not say “he that believeth on me shall have life, but has life.” It is not a blessing, of which the fruition is wholly reserved for heaven: in a spiritual sense, through faith the promise becomes performance, and assurance possession. The immortal seed is not only sown, but already sprung up in the soil of the renewed heart. The life of grace becomes the same in nature and quality with the life of glory, to which it leads. And if in this ungenial climate the plant will not attain its maturity, at least its progress intimates that it will terminate in absolute perfection.

In that valuable epitome of Old Testament biography, the eleventh of Hebrews, Paul defines faith to be a future but inalienable possession. He then exhibits the astonishing effects of faith displayed in men like ourselves, by marshalling the worthies who lived under the ancient economy, as actual evidences of the verity of this divine principle; a principle which he thus, by numberless personifications, vindicates from the charge of being nothing more than an abstract notion, a visionary, unproductive conceit, or an imaginary enthusiastic feeling. He combats this opinion by exhibiting characteristically the rich and the abundant harvest, springing from this prolific principle. On these illustrious examples our limits will not permit us to dwell; one or two instances must suffice.

The patriarchal father of the faithful, against hope believed in hope. Natural reliance, reasonable expectation, common experience, all were against him. From all these impediments he averted his eyes; he raised them to Him who had promised. Though the promise was so great as to seem incredible, his confidence in Omnipotence overbalanced all his apprehensions of any hindrances. With the eye of faith he not only saw his offspring as if immediately granted, but all the myriads which should hereafter
descend from him. He saw the great anticipated blessing, he saw "the star come out of Jacob,"—"the sceptre rise out of Israel." Though an exclamation of wonder escaped him, it was astonishment untinctured with distrust; he disregarded second causes; difficulties disappeared, impossibilities vanished, faith was victorious.

In this glorious catalogue of those who conquered by faith, there is perhaps not one who offers a more appropriate lesson to the higher classes of society, than the great legislator of Israel. Here is a man sitting at ease in his possessions, enjoying the sweets of plenty, the dignity of rank, the luxuries of literature, the distinction of reputation. All these he voluntarily renounces; he forgoes the pomp of a court, the advantages of a city, then the most learned in the world; he relinquishes the delights of polished society; refused to be called the grandson of a potent monarch; chooses rather to suffer affliction with his believing brethren than to enjoy the temporary pleasures which a sinful connivance could have obtained for him: he esteems the reproach of Christ,—a Saviour unborn till many ages after, unknown but to the eye of faith,—greater than all the treasures of Egypt. The accomplished, the learned, and the polite, will be best able to appreciate the value of such a sacrifice. Does it not seem to come more home to the bosoms of the elegant and opulent; and to offer an instruction, more intimate perhaps than is bequeathed even by those martial and heroic spirits who subdued kingdoms, quenched the violence of fire, stopped the mouths of lions, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens? These are instances of faith, which, if more sublime, are still of less special application. Few are now called to these latter sufferings, but many in their measure and degree to the other. May they ever bear in mind that Moses sustained his trials only as seeing him who is invisible!

To change the heart of a sinner is a higher exertion of power than to create a man, or even a world; in the latter case, as God made it out of nothing, so there was nothing to resist the operation; but in the former he has to encounter, not inanity, but repulsion: not an unobtrusive vacuity, but a powerful counteraction; and to believe in the divine energy which effects this renovation, is a greater exercise of faith than to believe that the Spirit of God, moving on the face of the waters, was the efficient cause of creation.

In producing this moral renovation, God has to subdue, not only the rebel in arms against the king, but "the little
state of man," in arms against himself, fighting against his convictions, refusing the redemption wrought for him. Almighty goodness has the twofold work of providing pardon for offenders, and making them willing to receive it. To offer heaven and then to prevail on man to accept it, is at once an act of God's omnipotence, and of his mercy.

Thus faith, which appears to be so easy, is of all things the most difficult:—which seems to be so common, is of all things most rare. To consider how reluctant the human heart adopts this principle; how it evades and stipulates; how it procrastinates, even when it does not pointedly reject; how ingenious its subterfuges, how specious its pretences; and then to deny that faith is a supernatural gift, is to reject the concurring testimony of reason, of Scripture, of daily observation, of actual experience.

St. Paul frequently intimates that faith is never a solitary attribute: he never separates it from humility, it being indeed the parent of that self-abasing grace. He also implies that faith is not, as some represent it, a disorderly, but a regulating principle, when he speaks of the law of faith, of the obedience of faith. Faith and repentance are the two qualities inseparably linked in the work of our salvation; repentance teaching us to abhor ourselves for sin,—faith, to go out of ourselves for righteousness. Holiness and charity Paul exhibits as its inseparable concomitants, or rather its necessary productions, their absence clearly demonstrating the want of the generating principle. May we not hence infer that wherever faith is seen not in his company, she is an impostor.

Of the great "mysteries of godliness" enumerated by Paul in his epistle to Timothy, he shows by his arrangement of the five particulars that compose them, that God believed on in the world, is the climax of this astonishing process." And it may be deduced from his general writings, that the reason why so many do not more anxiously labor for eternal happiness, is, because they do not practically believe it. The importance of this fundamental principle is so great, that our spiritual enemy is not so perseveringly bent on deterring us from this duty, or detaching us from that virtue, as on shaking the foundation of our faith. He knows if he can undermine this strong hold, slighter impediments will give way. As the first practical instance of human rebellion sprung from unbelief, so all subsequent obedience, to be available, must spring from faith

* 1 Tim. Chap. 2.
St. Paul shows faith to be a victorious principle. There is no other quality which can enable us to overcome the world. Faith is the only successful competitor with secular allurement. The world offers things great in human estimation, but it is the property of this grace to make great things look little; it effects this purpose by reducing them to their real dimensions. Nothing but faith can show us the emptiness of this world’s glory at the best, because nothing else views it in perpetual contrast with the blessedness of heaven; nothing else can give us such a feeling conviction of its brevity at the longest, as that principle which habitually measures it with eternity. It holds out the only light which shows a Christian that the universe has no bribe worth his acceptance, if it must be obtained at the price of his conscience, at the risk of his soul.

St. Paul demonstrates in his own instance, that faith is not only a regulating and conquering, but a transforming grace. It altered the whole constitution of his mind. It did not dry up the tide of his strong affections, but diverted them into a channel entirely different. To say all in a word, he was a living exemplification of the great Scripture doctrine which he taught—faith made him, emphatically, a new man. Thus his life as well as his writings prove that faith is an operating principle, a strenuous, influential, vigilant grace. If it teach that self-abasement which makes us lowly in our own eyes, it communicates that watchfulness which preserves us from the contamination of sin, a dread of every communication which may pollute. Its disciple is active as well as humble. Love is the instrument by which it works. But that love of God with which it fills the heart, is not maintained there in indolent repose, but quickened for the service of man. Genuine faith does not infuse a piety which is unprofitable to others, but draws it out in incessant desires and aims to promote the general good.

The apostle knew that the faith of many is rather drowsy than insincere, rather slothful than hypocritical; that they dread the consequences it involves, more than the profession it requires. He is therefore always explicit, always mindful to append the effect to the cause. Hence we hear so much from him and the other apostles of the fruits of faith, of adding to faith virtue: and it is worthy of remark, that in the roll of saints,—those spirits of renown in the ancient church, to which allusion has been made,—the faith of every one is illustrated, not only by some splendid act, but by a life of obedience.
We may talk as holily as Paul himself, and by a delusion not uncommon, by the very holiness of our talk, may deceive our own souls; but we may rest assured that where charity is not the dominant grace, faith is not the inspiring principle. Thus, by examining our lives, not our discourse, we shall "prove whether we are in faith."

Though a genuine faith is peremptory in its decision and resolute in its obedience, yet it deeply feels the source from whence it is derived. In that memorable instance of Abraham's faith, in the very act, instead of valuing himself on the strength of his conviction, he gave glory to God; and it is obvious that the reason why faith is selected as the prime condition of our justification, is, because it is a grace which, beyond all others, gives to God the entire glory; that it is the only attribute which subdues nothing for, derives nothing from self. Why are Christian and believer convertible terms, if this living principle be no groundwork of his character. If, then, it supplies his distinguishing appellation, should it not be his governing spirit of action?

Paul is a wonderful instance of the power of this principle. That he should be so entirely carried out of his natural character; that he who, by his persecuting spirit, courted the favor of the intolerant Sanhedrin, should be brought to act in direct opposition to their prejudices, supported by no human protection, sustained alone by the grace of Him whom he had stoutly opposed; that his confidence in God should rise in proportion to his persecutions from man; that the whole bent of his soul should be set directly contrary to his natural propensities, the whole force of his mind and actions be turned in full opposition to his temper, education, society, and habits; that not only his affections should be diverted into a new channel, but that his judgment and understanding should sail in the newly directed current; that his bigotry should be transformed into candor, his fierceness into gentleness, his untameable pride into charity, his intolerance into meekness,—can all this be accounted for on any principle inherent in human nature, on any principle uninspired by the Spirit of God?

After this instance,—and, blessed be God, the instance, though superior, is not solitary; the change, though miraculous in this case, is not less certain in others,—shall the doctrine so exemplified continue to be the butt of ridicule? While the scoffing infidel virtually puts the renovation of the human heart nearly on a footing with the metamorphoses of Ovid, or the transmigrations of Pythagoras; let not the timid Christian be discouraged: let not his faith be
shaken, though he may find that the principle to which he has been taught to trust his eternal happiness, is considered as false by him who has not examined into its truth; that the change, of which the sound believer exhibits so convincing an evidence, is derided by the philosophical skeptic, treated as chimerical by the superficial reasoner, or silently suspected as incredible by the decent moralist.

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CHAP. V.

The morality of St. Paul.

Christianity was a second creation. It completed the first order of things, and introduced a new one of its own, not subversive but perfective of the original. It produced an entire revolution in the condition of man, and accomplished a change in the state of the world, which all its confederated power, wit, and philosophy, not only could not effect, but could not even conceive. It threw such a preponderating weight into the scale of morals, by the superinduction of the new principle of faith in a Redeemer, as rendered the hitherto insupportable trials of the afflicted, comparatively light. It gave strength to weakness, spirit to action, motive to virtue, certainty to doubt, patience to suffering, light to darkness, life to death.

It is a rule of Aristotle, that principles and conclusions must always be within the sphere of the same science; that error will be inevitable, while men examine the conclusions of one science by the principles of another. He observes, that it is therefore absurd for a mathematician, whose conclusions ought to be grounded on demonstration, to ground them on the probabilities of the rhetorician.

May not this rule be transferred from the sciences of the schools to the science of morals? Will not the worldly moralist err, by drawing his conclusions as to the morality of a serious Christian from the principles of the worldly school; not being at all able to judge of the principles, of which the religious man's morals are the result.

But in our application of this rule, the converse of the proposition will not hold good; for the real Christian, being aware of the principles of worldly morality, expects that his conclusions should grow out of his principles, and in this opinion he seldom errs.
Christian writings have made innumerable converts to morality; but mere moral works have never made one convert to religion. They do not exhibit an originating principle. Morality is not the instrument but the effect of conversion. It cannot say, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." But when Christ has given life, then morality, by the activity of the inspiring motive, gives the surest evidence of renovated vitality, and exhibits the most unequivocal symptoms, not only of spiritual life, but of vigorous health.

St. Paul is sometimes represented not merely as the greatest of the apostles,—this is readily granted,—but virtually as being almost exclusively great. Is not this just ascription of superior excellence, however, too commonly limited to the doctrinal part of his compositions, and is not the consummate moral perfection which both his writings and his character so consistently display, sometimes, if not overlooked, yet placed in the background?

Though he did more for the moral accomplishment of the human character than has ever been effected by any other man; though he labored more abundantly than any other writer, to promote practical religion; yet polemical divinity on the one side, is too much disposed to claim him as her immediate champion; and then in order to make good her claim on the other, to assign to him a subordinate station in the ranks of sacred and moral writers.

Now the fact is, that all the prophets and apostles, aggregated, are not so abundant in ethical instruction, nor is the detail of moral conduct in any of them so minutely unfolded, or so widely ramified, as in the works of St. Paul. We may indeed, venture to assert, that David and our apostle are almost the only Scripture characters, of whom we have such full-length pictures. And for this reason; what was left imperfect in their delineation by their respective historians, is completely filled up by their own compositions. The narratives may be said to exhibit their shape and features; their own writings have added the grace of countenance, the force of expression, and the warmth of coloring.

It furnishes a complete answer to those who oppose the doctrines of grace, on the supposed ground of their encouraging sin; that, as there never was a man who expanded and illustrated those doctrines so fully, so there never was one whose character and compositions exhibit a more consistent and high-toned morality.
Like his sacred precursors, Paul always equally maintains the freeness of grace, and the necessity of holiness. The character of faith is not lowered by insisting that holy practice, which is nothing more than the exercises and consequences of faith, is the signs of its reality. Action, and motion, and speech, are not life, but they are the most unequivocal signs of life. Life evidences itself in them; and we do not disparage the principle, when we infer its effects, and estimate their value.

We sometimes hear in conversation St. James set up as the champion of moral virtue against St. Paul, the bold asserter of doctrines. For these two eminent apostles, there has been invented an opposition, which, as it never existed in their minds, so it cannot be traced in their writings. Without detracting from the perfect ethics of St. James, may we not be allowed to insist, that Paul, his coadjutor, not his rival, is equally zealous in the inculcation of practice; only running it up more uniformly into its principle; descending more deeply into its radical stock, connecting it more invariably with its motive. It is worth observing, in confirmation of their similarity of views, and perfect agreement in sentiment, that St. Paul and St. James derive their instance of the principle for which each is contending, from the same example, the Patriarch Abraham.

So far is Paul from undervaluing virtue, that he express-ly declares "that God will render to every man according to his deeds." So peremptory on this head, that he not only directs men to do good works, but to "maintain" them; so desirous to establish the act into a habit, that they must not only perform them, but be "careful" in the performance; so far from thinking, that, after his conver-sion, man was to be an inactive recipient of grace, that he not only enjoins us to be "always abounding in the work of the Lord," but assigns the very reason for it—the recep-tion of grace; "forasmuch as ye know that your labor will not be in vain in the Lord." He repeatedly presses on them perseverance, and perseverance is no fanatical sym-pom. His documents enforce a religion equable, consist-ent, progressive. This mode of instruction is no fruit of a heated brain, no child of emotion, no vapor of impulse, no effect of fancy. Not to instance those ample tables of Christian practice, the twelfth of Romans, the fifth of Thessalonians, the whole Epistle of Titus, and the two last chapters to the Ephesians,—every part of his writings either deduces holy practice from some corresponding principle; or else, after
he has been enforcing a system of doctrine, he habitually infers a system of morals growing out of it, inseparable from it. Indeed, throughout the whole of the last named Epistle, into which the very essence of Gospel doctrines is infused and compressed, all the social, personal, and relative duties are specifically detailed and enjoined:—the affection of husbands, the submission of wives, the tenderness of parents, the obedience of children, the subordination and fidelity of servants, economy of time, hands to be kept from stealing, "a tongue from evil speaking," a body maintained in "temperance, soberness, and chastity;" a guarded conversation, a gravity of carriage; the very decencies of life are all proposed with a minuteness which will scarcely bear a comparison but with his own catalogue of virtues in a kindred Epistle: "Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

So far from seeking to subvert the moral law, he takes unwearied pains to confirm it: but he fixes it on its true basis; while he denies its justifying power, he "establishes" its importance as a rule. He vindicates its value, not as a covenant for salvation, but as a measure of conduct. In no instance, however light, does he deny the obligation of believers to maintain a steadfast adherence to it, or discountenance, a minute observance of it. He not only shows that every sin is to be abandoned, but the contrary virtue adopted: and, though one of the fathers observes, that "a vice sometimes gives place where a virtue does not take it," yet the only certain symptom of the expulsion of a bad quality is the substitution of its opposite. And no man ever more forcibly condemned an empty profession than Paul: no one more severely reprobated a dead faith, no one more unequivocally commended "not the hearers, but the doers of the law."

He proves unanswerably that the doctrine of grace is so far from being hostile to sound practice, that it is the only source from which all legitimate virtue springs;—so far from slackening diligence, that it gives vigor to its activity;—so far from making vigilance superfluous, that its constant language is, Watch;—so far from limiting to a favored few the exhortation, that it makes it universal; "What I say unto you, I say unto all—watch!"

In directing his converts to virtuous deeds, he never fails to include the spirit in the act;—they must be ready to distribute, willing to communicate. He never fails to
show, that the characteristic and essence of all goodness is the desire of pleasing God. In other words, the action must be the fruit of love to Him. Qualities merely amiable are originally without that principle, and possessed even by animals, and possessed in a very high degree, as affection for their offspring, fidelity to their masters, gratitude for notice.

Paul, like his blessed Lord, is never so emphatically indignant against any of the signs of hypocrisy in professors, as against sinful practice. Like Him he is frequent in the enumeration of vices which he solemnly proclaims amount to an exclusion from heaven. Holy practice is indeed the only sign to the world of the sincerity of a Christian, and in a good measure is a sign to himself. It is the principal evidence which will regulate the retributive sentence at the last day.—Paul therefore calls that day "the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." He does not call it the day of his forming the judgment, but of his declaring it. God, who witnessed the act when it was done, and the motive which impelled it, wants himself no such evidence to assist his decision, but he uses it to manifest to men and angels his own strict justice. "In that awful day," says an eminent divine, "the judge will not examine men as to their experiences, he will not set every one to tell the story of his conversion, but he will bring forth his works."*

How acceptable, even in the ears of the most thoughtless, would that proclamation sound, the grace of God bringeth salvation, were it unaccompanied by the moral power ascribed to it, that of teaching us to deny our sensual appetites! How many would give a cheap assent to the principle, were it not clogged with such an encumbering consequence. Those who insist, that our salvation is effected by works, would gladly adopt faith as a speculative notion, instead of the inconvenient evidences which this self-denying grace involves.

One would imagine, that some who so loudly insist that we shall be saved by works, must mean works of supererogation, and that they depended for salvation on the transfer of the superfluity of the merits of others to themselves; for it is remarkable, that they trust their future bliss most confidently to good works, who have the slenderest portion of their own to produce.

The apostle is perpetually combating the fatal doctrine of those who insinuate that the freedom of the Gospel is a freedom from moral restraint. He describes it, indeed, as

*Edwards on Religious Affections
a deliverance from the sentence, but not from the precepts, of the law. No one ever more unremittingly opposed those who represent the constant inculcation of holy practice as an infringement of the liberty of a Christian. He perpetually demonstrates the necessity of a determinate rule of duty, without which even that love, which is sometimes pleaded as an apology for the neglect of duty,—that love, which is, indeed, the genuine source of all acceptable performance,—might be lowered into a vagrant, indefinite, disorderly principle. A religion, destitute of faith and love, is not the religion of Christ: a religion which furnishes no certain standard of conduct, is not the religion of the Gospel.

St. Paul accordingly animadverts severely on those, who presume to convert the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, into a pretence for licentious conduct. He strenuously refutes the charge, by intimating, that the new covenant enforces holiness of life, even more than the old, and enforces it on more engaging motives. The law deters from sin by denunciations: the Gospel invites to goodness by the most winning persuasions; God so loved the world, that he gave his Son to save it. The law shows man the danger of sin, and pronounces its punishment: the Gospel performs the higher act of love, it delivers him from its power. It is a quality ascribed to the love of Christ, that it "constraineth;" if compels us, as it were, to be compassionate. What can make us so tender to others as the experience of God's goodness to ourselves? Who is so ready to show mercy as he who has received it?

St. Paul derives all duties from this love of God in Christ as their foundation. All the motives to right action, all the arguments for holiness of life, are drawn from this source; all the lines of duty converge to this centre. If Paul censures, he points to this only spring of hope; if he laments, he turns to this only true consolation; if he insists that the grace of God hath appeared, he points to its practical object, "teaching us to live soberly, righteously, and godly." When he determines to know nothing but his Saviour, and even Him under the degrading circumstance of crucifixion, he includes in that knowledge all the religious and moral benefits of which it is susceptible.

They who contend that the Gospel is only a scheme of morals, struggle hard to keep down the compact to their own depressed standard. They will not allow of a grain or a scruple "beyond the bond," but insist, that whatever is not specifically commanded, is superfluous; what is above
their own pitch is unnecessary. If they allow that it is sublime, they insist that it is impracticable. If they allow that the love, peace and joy of the apostle, are desirable, they do not desire them as fruits of the spirit, as signs of acceptance. The interior principle, those views which take in the very depths of the heart, as well as the surface of life,—any practical use of these penetrating truths, they consider as something which the enthusiastic reader does not find, but make.

The mere social and political virtues are made for this world. Here they have their origin, their use, and their reward. All the motives to various practice, not derived from the hope of future blessedness, will be inefficient. There is a powerful obligation to "perfect holiness" to those who do not perfect it in the fear "of God." Grace will not thrive abundantly in that heart which does not believe it to be the seed of glory.

The moralist of our apostle is not merely a man possessed of agreeable qualities, of some social and civil virtues, of generosity and good nature, qualities excellent as far as they go, and which, as a means to the good order of society, can scarcely be too much valued; but these qualities a man may possess, without having the love of God shed abroad in his heart, without desiring "to live for him who died for him." Such qualities will gain him credit, but that very credit may endanger his salvation, if worldly esteem make him rest satisfied, without the "honor which cometh from God." The purity, sublimity, and consistency of St. Paul's requirements, every where manifest that his moral man is not merely a disciple of Antoninus or Epictetus, but a liege subject of the Messiah's spiritual kingdom.

Paul shows, that the humbling doctrines of the cross are so far from lowering the tone of moral obligation, that they raise the standard of practical virtue to an elevation totally unknown under any other mode of instruction. But there is a tendency in the heart of man, in his natural state, to rebel against these doctrines, even while he professes himself an advocate for virtue; to set up the virtue which he presumes that he possesses, against religion, to which he is chiefly hostile for the very elevation which it gives to virtue: this, more than the doctrines, and even than the mysteries of revelation, is the real cause of his hostility.

We have known persons, when pressed on the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, think to get rid of the argument, by declaring that they did not pretend to understand St. Paul; that, for their part, they were quite satisfied with
Micah’s religion: “To do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God,” was enough for them. In what they call this comfortable, and reasonable, and practicable scheme of religion, they are little aware what strictness is involved, what integrity, what charity, what holiness. They little think how nearly the prophet’s religion approached that of the apostle. There is in fact no difference between them, but such as necessarily arises out of the two dispensations under which they lived. To walk humbly with God, we must believe in the revelation of his Son, and consequently adopt the principle he enjoins: we must adopt every doctrine, and believe every mystery. To walk humbly with God, is a principle which stretches to the bounds of the whole universe of revelation.

More men are indebted to Christianity for their morality, than are willing to confess the obligation. It communicates a secret and unacknowledged infection. Living under a public recognition of Christianity, under Christian laws, and in Christian society, causes many a proud heart to believe more than it cares to own, and to do more good than the man is willing to ascribe to the faith which, if it does not actually influence his mind, has made right actions so common, that not to do them is dishonorable. Others, who do not appear to live under the direct illumination of the Gospel, have yet the benefit of its refracted rays, which, if the conveyance is too imperfect to communicate religious warmth, yet diffuses sufficient light to point the way to many moral duties.

We are apt to call men good, because they are without certain bad qualities. But this is not only not knowing religion, it is not knowing human nature. All vices are not affinities; of course the very indulgence of one vice is not seldom an exclusion of another, as covetousness avoids profligacy, and ambition expels indolence; but though they are natural antipathies, they all spring from the same source; the same fountain of corrupt nature feeds both.

Nor does the goodness of St. Paul’s moral man consist merely in abstaining from wicked actions; nor merely in filling the external duties of his profession. While he is active in business, he must be fervent in spirit. While transacting the ordinary affairs of life, he must be serving the Lord. In worldly moralists, the excessive pursuit of business, as well as of pleasure, leaves a clinging to it in the thoughts, and almost exclusive attachment to it in the heart, long after the actual engagement has ceased, the hankering mind continues to act over again the scenes of its interest, of its ambition, or of its amusement.
Again, the worldly moralist, while he practises some virtues, is indifferent to others. He is temperate, perhaps, but he is ambitious. He is diligent, but he is sordid. Whereas Christian morality as taught by St. Paul, hangs as it were in clusters; every virtue issuing from his principles touches on other virtues at so many points, that no man possesses one in perfection who does not possess many, who does not at least desire to possess all; while the divine spirit, pervading like the sap every fibre of the soul, strengthens the connection of its graces, and infuses holy aims into the whole character.

We have employed the term *morality* in compliance with common usage; but adopted in the worldly sense, it gives but an imperfect idea of the apostle's meaning. His preceptive passages are encircled with a kind of glory; they are illuminated with a beam from heaven; they proceed from the Spirit of God, are produced by faith in him. There is every where that beautiful intermixture of motive and action, that union of the cause and the effect, the faith and its fruits, that uniform balance of the principle and the produce, which render these epistles an exhaustless treasury of practical wisdom, as well as an imperishable record of divine grace.

St. Paul every where runs up the stream to the spring. The government he inculcates is spiritual. Not content to recommend the obedience of the life, he brings the very thoughts and desires under control. He traces up the act to the temper which produces it. He dwells more on the spirit of the world than on its actual offences. He knew that many would reprobate bad actions, who do not seek that spirit which would prevent their generating. He knew that men judge soundly enough on questions in which they have no bias from interest or appetite. For one who believes that to be "carnally-minded is death," twenty believe in the miraculous gift of tongues, and even in the doctrine of the trinity, because they fancy, that neither of these trenches on their purse, or their pleasure, or their vain projects.

What Paul calls "doing by nature the things contained in the law," and "a man being a law unto himself," we frequently see illustrated in some well bred and highly cultivated minds. They have a strong sense of honor and integrity; to this sense their credit and their comfort require they should live up. The natural make of their mind, perhaps, is liberal; from education they have imbibed noble sentiments: they have adopted a system of equity which
they would think it dishonorable to violate; they are generous and humane; but in matters of self-indulgence they are not scrupulous; in subduing their inclinations, in abstinence from some one governing desire or impetuous appetite,—in all this they come short; to all this their rule does not extend. Their conduct, therefore, though amiable, and useful, and creditable, yet is not the "obedience of faith;" these good qualities might have been exercised, had Christianity never existed; this is not bringing the practice, much less the thoughts, into the captivity of Christ. The man is a law unto himself, and acts consistently enough with this self-imposed legislation.

Even if no religion had ever existed, if a deity did not exist,—for the reference is not to religion, not to the will of the deity,—such morality would be acceptable to society, because to society it is profitable. But how can any action be pleasing to God, in which there is no purpose of blessing him? How can any conduct be acceptable to God, to whom it renders no homage, to whom it gives no glory?

Scripture abounds with every motive to obedience, both rational and spiritual. But it would achieve but half its work, had it stopped there. As peaceable creatures, we require not only inducements to obedience, but a heart, and a power, and a will to obey; assistance is as necessary as motives; power as indispensable as precept;—all which requisites are not only promised by the word, but conferred by the Spirit of God.

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CHAP. VI.

The Disinterestedness of St. Paul.

The perfection of the Christian character does not so much consist in this excellence, or that talent, or the other virtue; in the performance of some right action, or the abstinence from some wrong one, as in the determination of the whole soul for God. This generous surrender of self, whether of the sensual or of the intellectual self is the unequivocal test of a heart consecrated by man to his Maker. He has no by-ends, no secret reserves. His intention is single, his way is straight forward; he keeps his end in view without deflection, and he pursues it without weariness.
St. Paul and his associates were the first moral instructors who preached not themselves. Perhaps there is scarcely a more striking proof of the grandeur of his spirit, than his indifference to popularity. This is an elevation of character, which not only no Pagan sage has reached, but which not every Christian teacher has been found to attain.

This successful apostle was so far from placing himself at the head of a sect, that he took pains to avoid it. In some subsequent instructors, this vanity was probably the first seed of heresy; the sound of Ebionites and Marcionites would as much gratify the ear of the founders, as bringing over proselytes to their opinions would delight their feelings. Paul would have rejected with horror any such distinction. He who earnestly sought to glorify his Master, would naturally abase himself. With a holy indignation he asks, "What then is Paul, and what is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?" He points out to them the littleness of such exclusive fondness in men, who had such great objects in view—that overvalue not Paul or Apollos as yours, for all things are yours."

It is impossible not to stop a moment, in order to notice the fine structure of the period to which these words are an introduction. It would be difficult to find a more finished climax: "Let no man glory in men; for all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas; or the world, or life, or death; or things present or things to come; all are yours, and you are Christ's and Christ is God's."*

Knowing the proneness of human nature to this party spirit, he takes pains to prevent excessive individual attachments. There is no instance of a man so distinguished, so little distinguishing himself. He chooses to merge himself in the general cause, to sink himself in the mass of faithful ministers.—This is particularly evident in the beginning of many of his Epistles, by his humility in attaching, to his own, some name of far inferior note, as his associate in the work;—"Paul and Sosthenes"—"Paul and Sylvanus,"—"Timotheus our brother;"—and in writing to the Thessalonians, he connects both the latter names with his own.

He labored to make the people bear in mind that the apostles were the disseminators, not the authors, of the faith which they preached. Miraculous as his conversion had been, superior as were his endowments, favored as he was by Divine inspiration, he not only did not assume, but he rejected, any distinction, and only included himself

* 1 Corinth. iii. 22.
among the teachers of their common Christianity. Thus he bequeathed to his successors a standing pattern of humility, and of the duty of ascribing their talents, their application, and their success, to him, from whom whatever advantages they possess, are derived.

St. Paul did not rank, on the one hand, with those liberal modern philosophers, who assert that virtue is its own reward; nor on the other, with those abstracted mystics, who profess an unnatural disinterestedness, and a superhuman disdain of any recompense but that which they find in the pure love of God. He was not above accepting heaven, not for any works of righteousness which he had done, but as the free gift of God through the righteousness that had been wrought for him. He was not too proud and independent to confess, that the nearness of heavenly glory was with him a most animating principle.

This hope cheered his fainting spirit; this prospect not only regulated, but almost annihilated his sense of suffering. Invisible things were made so clear to the eye of faith; remote things were brought so near to one, who always kept up in his mind a comparative estimate of the brevity of this afflicted life, and the duration of eternal happiness; faith so made the future present; love so made the labor light; the earnest of the Spirit was given him in such a measure; —that mortality seemed, even here, to be swallowed up of life. His full belief in the immediate presence of God, in that world in which he was assured, that light, purity, holiness, and happiness, would be enjoyed in their most consummate perfection, not only sustained his hope, but exhilarated his heart.

If it does not support us under our inferior trials in the same manner, it is because we have rather a nominal than a practical faith, rather an assenting than an obeying conviction; it is because our eyes are not fixed on the same objects, nor our hearts warmed with the same affections; it is because our attention is directed so sparingly to that Being, and that state, to which his was supremely devoted. Ought we to complain, that we enjoy not the same supports, nor the same consolations, while we do not put ourselves in the same way to obtain them?

But though Paul was no disciple of that metaphysical theology, which makes such untaught distinctions, as to separate our love of God from any regard to our own attitude; though he might have been considered a selfish man, by either of the classes to whom allusion has been made, yet true disinterestedness was eminently his charac-
teristic. Another instance of a human being so entirely devoid of selfishness, one who never took his own ease, or advantage, or safety, or credit, into the account, cannot be found. If he considered his own sufferings, he considered them for the sake of his friends. "Whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation." The only joy he seemed to derive, when he was "pressed out of measure, above strength," was, that others might be comforted and encouraged by his sufferings. So also of his consolations; the principal joy which he derived from them was, that others might be animated by them. This anxiety for the proficiency of his converts, in preference to his own safety; his disposition to regard every object in due subjection to the great design of his ministry; his humble, vigilant care, while exulting in the hope of an eternal crown, that he might "not himself be cast away;"—form, in combination with the rest of his conduct, a character which we must allow has not only no superior, but no parallel.

The union of generosity and self-denial,—and without the one the other is imperfect,—was peculiarly exemplified in our apostle.—His high-minded independence on man, had nothing of the monkish pride of poverty, for he knew "how to abound;" nor was it the worldly pusillanimous dread of it, for he "knew how to want."

In vindicating the right of the ecclesiastical body to an equitable provision, as a just requital of their labors, he nobly renounced all claim to any participation for himself. —"I have used none of these things!" This wise and dignified abstinence in the original formation of a church, which must be founded, before provision can be made for its continuance, while it maintained the dignity of his own disinterestedness, enabled him with the better grace, and more powerful effect, to plead the legitimate claims of her ministers; and to insist, that it was the duty of the people to supply their temporal things to those from whom they received their spiritual things. While he himself refused to claim them, lest it should be made a pretence for hindering the Gospel, he yet looked forward with an eye of kindness and justice, in thus stipulating, as it were, for the comfort of the Christian ministers to the end of the world.

In a long expositulatory argument, illustrated by a variety of analogous instances, he shows the propriety of a provision being made for those who dedicated themselves to the spiritual instruction of others:—the warrior engaged in the defence of his country is supported at the public expense; the planter by the produce of his vineyard; the
reeder of a flock by the milk of his flock; the agriculturist by the profits of his plough.

He strengthens his argument by an allusion to a humane practice in the old law, by which even the ox was allowed to participate in that plenty which his labor assisted to procure; then, by a sudden generous interjection,—"Doth God take care for oxen?" he intimates that this provision of mercy for the beast, was emblematical of this justice,—for it scarcely amounted to mercy,—which ought to secure to every minister a fair remuneration for the sacrifice he has made of ease and profit, by addicting himself to the service of the altar.

After, however, having declared that he renounced all reward for himself, fearing that this assurance might be construed into an insinuation of his wish to receive the emolument which he pretended to refuse, with a noble disdain of so mean an expedient, he protests that it would be better for him to die of want, rather than, by receiving pecuniary recompense, to rob himself of his honest claim to the consciousness of disinterested services.

St. Paul's conduct in these instances affords something of the same fine climax in action, with that which Jesus expressed in words, when he sent to the Baptist the proofs of his divinity. After enumerating his miracles of love, he closes with declaring, as the highest possible instance of that love, *that the Gospel was preached*—but to what class? to the poor! From the words of Christ, turn to the life of Paul. The persecution of his enemies, the fatigue of his travels, the falsehood of his brethren, the labor of instructing so many nations, of converting so many cities, of founding so many churches,—what is his relaxation from such labors, what his refreshment from such perils, what his descent from such heights?—Working with his own hands for his daily bread, and for the relief of the poor. The profane critic may call this the art of sinking, the Christian will deem it the noblest point of elevation. Might not the apostle well say, "Be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ?"

How has the world stood in just admiration of the generous conduct of Cincinnatus! Tired with the fatigues of war, and satiated with the glories of conquest, he very rationally, and (as he refused all reward) it must be owned very disinterestedly, withdrew to his country-house, from which he had been reluctantly torn. He withdrew to enjoy, in the bosom of his family, the advantages of agriculture and the pleasures of retirement. To such a retreat would Paul have flown with delight, had he not known that, for him it
was not a duty. He, unlike the dictator, had no intervals of unmolested claim; it was not in the quiet of repose, but in the very midst of perils and of persecutions, that he labored for his own support.

It cannot be denied, that his whole consistent practice furnished this sure criterion of a faithful minister,—that he enjoined no self-denial, preached no mortification, recommended no exertion to others, of which he gave not himself a shining example. While he pointed out to his associates the duty of "approving themselves ministers of God in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses," he was not himself lying on a bed of roses; he was not making light of sorrows, of which he was not personally partaking; he did not deal out orders for the patient endurance of sufferings, the bitterness of which he had not tasted. He had largely shared in the stripes and imprisonments which it was possible some of his followers might be speedily called to endure.

At the same time, he furnishes them with cautions drawn from his own invariable prudence, when he exhorted them to give no offence. This was not altogether to avoid personal discredit, though that should be carefully guarded against, so much as to preserve the character of religion itself from the obloquy she would sustain from the faults of her disciples. His great object why the ministry should not be blamed, was because he knew how ineffectual all teaching would be rendered, if the teacher committed the faults he reprehended, or even exercised a religious vocation in an imprudent manner.

In another place, after recapitulating some of the hardships which himself and his companions were suffering, up to the very moment when he was describing them,—their hunger and thirst, their nakedness and buffeting, deprived of domestic comforts, destitute of a settled home; having shown what was their treatment, he proceeds to show what was their temper under it:—Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat. This is indeed practical Christianity!

After enumerating the trials to which they may be exposed, he sets over against them a catalogue of the qualities by which they should be distinguished, — purity, knowledge, kindness; thus encouraging them to patience by the integrity of their motives; and to the adornment of their calling, by the skillfulness and affection with which they exercised it. He tempers their sorrows and difficulties, by interspersing with the recital those divine consola-
tions, from which alone genuine cheerfulness can be de-

rived.

In this enumeration he had not to rack his invention for precedents; he had only to make a transcript of the state of his own mind, and the tenor of his own practice, to give them a complete delineation of the ministerial char-

acter. While he encourages them to perseverance by the success which might attend their labors, he prepares them also to expect reproach; mingling good and evil report as the probable lot of every devoted servant of Christ.

When he was setting out from Ephesus for Jerusalem, "bound in the spirit, not knowing the things that should befall him," the indefinite yet certain anticipation of ca-

lamity which he expressed, might have been interpreted into the pusillanimous forebodings of his own apprehensive mind: he guards against this suspicion by informing us, it was by the unerring inspiration of the Holy Ghost, he was assured, "that bonds and afflictions awaited him in every city;" so that he knew infallibly, wherever he went, it was only a change of place, not of peril. Yet was this conviction so far from arresting his purpose, so far from inclining him to hesitate, or not to persist in the path of duty because it was the path of danger, that his mighty faith converted duty into choice, elevated duty into joy. Hear his triumphant proclamation: "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God."

It is not the nature of Christianity to convert a man of sense into a driveller; if it make him self-abased in the sight of God, and in his own eyes, it does not oblige him to a renunciation of his just claims in civil society, nor to a base abjection in the sight of men. He is not desirous of honors which do not belong to him, but he does not despise those to which he has a lawful claim. The char-

acter of Paul, like the religion he taught, is manly, ra-

tional, ingenious.

This combination of dignity with humility, he uniformly presents to us. He always humbles, but never disparages himself. He, who on one occasion was "the least of all saints," was, on another, "not a whit behind the chiefest of them." He, that was "not worthy to be called an apostle," would yet magnify his apostleship. He who would pa-

tiently endure injury and reproach, yet refused to be scourged contrary to law. He, who was illegally impris-
oned at Philippi, accepted not the deliverance till the
magistrates themselves came in person to release him,—a
resolution not only due to his own innocence, but probably
intended also to render the magistrates afraid of proceed-
ing unjustly against other Christians. He, who could
submit to live by the labor of his own hands, and to re-
ceive charity in his sickness, would vindicate his civil title
to respect, and not only urge his right of Roman citizen-
ship, but press his peculiar ground of superiority over the
officer who would have contended with him, by declaring
that his own freedom was not a purchase, but an inherit-
ance. He who determined to know nothing but "Jesus
Christ, and him crucified," could assert, when it became
proper, his liberal education under a master in Israel.
He, who was now lying at the foot of the cross, avowed
that he had been bred at the feet of Gamaliel. He, who
was beating down the pride of "gifts" in the assuming
Corinthians, scrupled not to declare his own superiority in
this very article, yet with an exclusive ascription of the
gift to the Giver. "I thank my God, that I speak with
more tongues than you all."

To those who understand what Bishop Horseley calls
"the paradoxes of Christianity," it will be perfectly intelli-
gible, that one, who was so feelingly alive to the percep-
tion of sin, as to deplore that "when he would do good,
evil was present with him," could also, in the integrity of
his heart, boldly appeal to the Thessalonians for the purity
of his own conduct, and that of his companions—"you
know how holy, and justly, and unblameably we have lived
among you."

He was aware that contentions about practices and op-
inions comparatively insignificant, were generally the most
vehemently and uncharitably carried on by men who are
the most cold and indifferent in the defence of truths of
the most awful moment. Inflexible himself in every thing
which was of vital importance, yet accommodating in trivial
matters, about which men of narrow views pertinaciously
contend, he shaped the course of his usefulness to the
winding current of life, and the flexure of circumstances;
and was ever on the watch to see how, by giving way in
things indifferent, he might gain men to the great cause
which he lived only to promote.

Never was any sentiment more completely perverted,
than that which is so expressive of the condescension that
distinguishes his character,—I am all things to all men

*Acts, ch. 16
The latitudinarian in principle or in morals, who would not consider Paul's authority as paramount on any other occasion, eagerly pleads this text to justify his own accommodation to everything that is tempting in interest, or seductive in appetite. This sentiment, which proceeded from a candor the most amiable, was, in the apostle, always governed by an integrity the most unbending.

To what purpose did he make use of this maxim? "That he might by all means save some." Let those who justify its adoption by the sanction of Paul, employ it to the same end to which he employed it. But is it not frequently carried to a conceding length, to which he would never have carried it, to answer any purpose; and is not the end itself often such as he would not have sought, even by the best means? To the perversion of this sentiment the fashionable doctrine of expediency may be imputed,—a doctrine not more corrupt in its principle, and dangerous in its results, than opposite to the whole bent and current of the apostle's views, as developed in his writings and in his practice.

That hollow maxim, of doing evil that good may come, had indeed been adopted by some of the wisest Pagan legislators. Not only the prudent Numa pretended to Divine communications with his inspiring goddess, in order that his laws might be received with more reverence; even the open-hearted conqueror of Carthage used to enter the capitol alone, under pretense of consulting the gods, that whatever enterprises he wished to recommend to the people, they might believe them to be directed and approved by their deities. But nothing impedes the march of truth more than the offered assistance of falsehood. Nothing is more injurious to a good cause than the attempt to help it forward with fictitious or even doubtful additions. Some of the best cases,—cases corroborated by a thousand indubitable facts,—have been injured for a time, by the detection of petty instances of misrepresentation, or mistake, or aggravation in ill-judging advocates.

After the example of the illustrious Romans above recited, but with far less excuse, even some weak Christians, in the second century, fancing that deceit might succeed where truth had failed, attempted by forgery to supply the deficiencies of Scripture. Spurious Sibylline verses, under the reign of one of the Antonines, were imposed by fraud upon folly, as prophecies of Christ, pretending to be as old as the deluge. The attempt to mend perfection never answers
To these political impostures what a contrast does St. Paul exhibit at once in his writings and his life!—In his writings he declares, in one short sentence, of all such principles, "their condemnation is just." In his life he suffered evil to extremity, that good might be produced; but never, under the most alluring pretence, did evil, or connived at it. He drew in no convert, by displaying only the pleasant side of Christianity. To bring forward the doctrine of the cross was his first object; though, since his time, to keep them out of sight has sometimes been thought a more prudent measure. But the political wisdom of the Jesuitical missionaries failed as completely, as the simple integrity of the apostle succeeded.

His arguments, it is true, were powerful, his motives attractive; but he never shrunk from the avowal, that they were drawn wholly from things unseen, future, eternal. "To you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his holy angels." "If we suffer with Christ, we shall be also glorified together."—"The sufferings of the present world are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed." And in this view he is not afraid to speak of suffering, as a favor connected with faith. It is given unto them, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe, but also to suffer for his sake.

How powerful must have been the convictions of his faith, and the integrity of his heart, which could not only conquer prejudices the most inveterate, but could lead him to renounce every prospect of riches and power, fame and distinction,—objects which were likely to have taken deep hold on a temper so fervent, a genius so active! He knew that the cause he was embracing, would defeat all such expectations. He possibly might have advanced his fortune, certainly his reputation, under his Jewish masters, had he pursued those practices in which he was so hotly engaged, when he was so exceedingly mad against the Church of God.

What was the use which, in his new character, he made of his natural advantages? It was the same which he made of his supernatural graces. Did the one induce intellectual pride? Did the other inspire spiritual self-sufficiency? Was it his aim to exalt the accomplished preacher? Was it not his only endeavor to magnify the crucified Saviour? He sought no civil power, courted no ecclesiastical supremacy. He conferred honor on episcopacy by ordaining bishops, but took no rank himself. He intermeddled with no party. All his interference with governments was to teach the people to obey them.
He had nothing to bias him at the time of his conversion, any more than afterwards. — He embraced Christianity when at the height of its discredit: in defending it, he was neither influenced by the obstinacy of supporting a preconceived opinion, nor the private motive of personal attachment. As he had not been a follower nor an acquaintance of Jesus, he had never been buoyed up with the hope of a place in his expected temporal kingdom. Had this been the case, mere pride and pertinacity in so strong a character, might have led him to adhere to the falling cause, lest by deserting it he might be accused of disappointment in his hopes, or pusillanimity in his temper. Was it probable then, that on any lower principle he would encounter every hazard, sacrifice every hope, annihilate every possibility of preferment, for the cause of a man, after his ignominious death, whom he had so fiercely opposed, when the danger was less alarming, and the hope less uncertain.

His strong faith was fortified by those trials which would have subdued a weak one. His zeal increased with the darkness of his earthly prospects. What were his inducements? The glory of God. What was his reward? Bonds and imprisonment. When arrived at any fresh scene of peril, did he smooth his language to secure his safety? — Did he soften an unpallatable truth to attract upon false grounds? Did he practise any artifice to swell the catalogue of his proselytes? Did he take advantage of ignorance and idolatry, when acclamations met him? Did he court popularity when he refused divine honors? Did he not prefer his Master's crown of thorns to the garlands with which the priests of Jupiter would have crowned him? Is it not observable, that this offer of deification disturbed the serenity of his spirit more than all his injuries had done?

Two remarks arise out of this circumstance. How little is popular acclamation any proof of the comparative excellence of the objects of acclaim; and how little is genuine grandeur of soul elated by it! Jesus, after all his miraculous deeds, as full of mercy as of power,— deeds repeatedly performed in his own country, and before the same spectators—never had divine honors paid him. While, for a single cure, Paul and his companions were instantly deified, though they rejected the homage with a holy indignation. Nothing could more fully prove their deep humility than that they bore the abuse and ill treatment of the people with meekness; but when they would have worshipped them, "they rent their clothes."

In fine, no principle short of the faith described by our
apostle in the eleventh of Hebrews, could have enabled him to sustain with such heroic firmness, the diversified sufferings alluded to in the twelfth of the second of Corinthians. Nothing short of that divine support could have produced a disinterestedness so pure, a devotedness so sublime.

The afflictions of the saints serve to prove the distinguished character of God's favor. The grace so eminently afforded to this apostle neither exempted him from sorrow, nor suffering, nor dangers, nor calumny, nor poverty, nor a violent death. That its results were in the opposite direction, shows at once the intrinsic nature of the divine favor, and the spirit in which it is received and acted upon by sincere Christians.

CHAP. VII.

St. Paul's prudence in his conduct towards the Jews

The judgment of St. Paul is remarkably manifest in the juxta-position of things. In opening his epistle to his converts at Rome, among whom were many Jews for whose benefit he wrote, he paints the moral character of the Pagan capital in the darkest colors. The fidelity of his gloomy picture is corroborated by an almost contemporary historian, * who, though a Pagan and a countryman, paints it in still blacker shades, and without the decorum observed by St. Paul.

The representation here made of Roman vice, would be in itself sufficiently pleasing to the Jews; and it would be more so, when we observe, what is most worthy of observation, the nature of the charges brought against the Romans. As if the wisdom of God had been desirous of vindicating itself by the lips of Paul in the eyes of his own countrymen the Jews, the vices charged upon the Romans are exactly those which stand in opposition to the spirit of some one injunction of the decalogue. Now, though the heathen writers were unacquainted with this code, yet the spontaneous breach of its statutes proved most clearly these statutes to have been suggested by the most correct foreknowledge of the evil propensities of our common nature

* Suetonius.
The universal violation of the law, even by those who knew it not, manifested the omniscience of the lawgiver.

And, let it be further remarked in this connection, that no exceptions could be taken against the justice of God, for animadverting on the breach of a law, which was not known: inasmuch as, so faithful was the law of Mount Sinai to the law of conscience, the revealed to the natural code of morals, that the Romans in offending one had offended both; in breaking unwittingly the decalogue, they had knowingly rebelled against the law of conscience; they had sinned against the light of nature; they had stifled the suggestions of their better judgment; they had consciously abused natural mercies; they had confounded the distinctions of good and evil, of which they were not insensible. "Their conscience bore them witness" that they violated many obvious duties, so that "even these were without excuse."

The unconverted Jews would, doubtless, then feel no small pleasure in contemplating this hideous portrait of human crimes as without excuse, and would naturally be tempted, with their usual self-complacency, to turn it to their own advantage, and boastfully to thank God that they were not like other men, or even like these Romans.

To check this unbecoming exultation, the apostle, with admirable dexterity, in the very next chapter* begins to pull down their high conceits. He presents them with a frightful picture of themselves, drawn from the life, and aggravated by a display of that superior light and knowledge which rendered their immoralities far more inexcusable. To the catalogue of the vices which he had reprehended in the others, he adds that of self-sufficiency, arrogance, and harsh judgment, which formed so distinguished a feature in the Pharisaic character. Paul in this point shows the equity of distributive justice. The Jews had sinned, not only against the law they knew, but the law they venerated.—They rested in the law, not with gratitude for the distinction, but with security in the privilege; and they were ruined, he suggests, by a vain confidence in those external advantages which would have been their glory, had not privileges been converted into a substitute for piety. What apology should he now offer for the sins of the chosen nation, the peculiar people, the possessors and the boasters of the law, distinguished, not only by having received, but by being the hereditary, exclusive proprietors of the divine oracles? Thus, while he convicts his own nation, he gives

* Romans, ch. ii.
an awful lesson to posterity of the vanity of forms and profession, that it is not possessing nor dispersing the Bible that will carry men to heaven, but only as they individually believe its doctrines, submit to its authority, and conform to its precepts. The apostle reminds them, that it is not the knowledge of God's will, which they possessed; nor the approbation of "things that are excellent," which they manifested; nor their confident ambition of teaching others; nor their skill to guide the blind; nor the form of knowledge; nor the letter of the law, which could avail without personal holiness.

After this severe reproof, for doing themselves the wrong things they censured, and for not doing the right things they taught, he suddenly turns upon them with a rapid succession of interrogatories respecting their own practice, personally applying each distinct subject of their instruction of others to each distinct failure of their own in those very points of conduct which they insisted on; proving upon them, that through this glaring inconsistency, "the name of God was blasphemed among unbelievers."

Thus he demonstrates that the Jew and Gentile stand on the same level with regard to their definitive sentence, each being to be judged according to their respective law. Nay, the conscientious Pagan will find more favor than the immoral Jew. Profession will not justify, but aggravate offence. Men, indeed, may see our exactness in forms and observances, and will justly commend what is in itself commendable; but as they cannot discern the thoughts and intents of the heart, they may admire as piety what is at worst hypocrisy, and at best but form. Whilst of the sincere Christian, he is a Jew who is one inwardly; not in the letter, but in the heart and the spirit, whose praise is not of men, but of God.

By the august simplicity and incontrovertible reasoning of this epistle to Rome, and by that supernatural power which accompanied it, he brought down the arrogance of human ability from its loftiest heights, subdued the pride of philosophy in its strong holds, and superseded the theology, without aiming at the splendor, of the most amiable and eloquent of all the Romans in his admired work on the "nature of the gods." By one short address to that city, written in the demonstration of the spirit and of power, he "destroyed the wisdom of the wise, and brought to nothing the understanding of the prudent."

Knowing that pride was the dominant disposition of his
own countrymen, he loses no occasion of attacking this master sin, and frequently intimates how ill it became such an insignificant and perverse people to arrogate to themselves a superiority, for which, though their advantages furnish them with means, their practice furnishes them with no shadow of pretence.

In speaking on this subject, St. Paul used none of the cant, but displayed all the kindness of liberality. Speaking of the Jews, "he bears them record that they had a zeal for God," but instantly his veracity obliged him to qualify his candor, by lamenting that their zeal was not regulated by knowledge. Their perverseness rather increased his desire of serving them, than drove him into a hopeless indifference; their provocations grieved, but neither silenced nor exasperated him.

It was the high destiny of this distinguished apostle, that he was to be the honored instrument of enlarging, to an indefinite extent, the hitherto contracted pale of Christianity. The law of Moses had been committed to one single people, and it was one of the conditions of that law, that they to whom it was given were interdicted from any free intercourse with the rest of the world. A larger heart and a higher mind than those of Paul, could not have been found for the new and expanded service. Christianity, through him, opened wider her liberal arms, broke through the narrow barrier, and carried her unconditional offers of boundless emancipation to every captive of sin and ignorance throughout all the kingdoms of the world.

But though Paul's original destination was, that he should be the apostle of the Gentiles; though his labors were to be more especially consecrated to that innumerable mass to whom the narrow minded Jews grudged the very chance of access to heaven; yet wherever he came, he showed this mark of regard, that he opened his first public instructions in the Jewish synagogue, referring the hearers in his discourses to their own prophets, as he did his Pagan auditors to their own authors.

It was necessary that the word of God should be first spoken to the Jews, they being the depositaries of the antecedent revelations made by the Almighty; which revelations being preparatory to the introduction of the Gospel, and abounding with prophetic intimations of the Messiah, if the Jews should accept the new revelation as the completion of the old, it would largely contribute to convince the heathen that Christianity was in truth a Divine institution.

The annals of the Jews, insulated as they had been as a
people, had become, by Divine appointment, connected with the history of other nations. Their captivity had brought them into contact with Persia and Babylon. As they always continued a commercial people, they had, after their dispersion, by their extensive traffic, carried their religion with their commerce into various countries. Thus their proverbial love of gain had been over-ruled to a providential purpose, that of carrying the knowledge of the one true God among the Gentiles. This again, by that secret working of Infinite Wisdom, served as a prelude to the appearance of Christianity in these countries, and would probably lessen their indisposition to receive it. By the same providential ordination of that Power who educes good from evil, the emperor Claudius, in banishing the Christians from Rome, caused the faith to be more extensively spread by these exiles, who were dispersed through different countries:—and, to mention another instance, by the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas, though the comfort of Christian society was mutually lost, yet their separation caused the Gospel to be preached at the same time in two places instead of one. But though the sins of the worst men, and the infirmities of the best, are made subservient to God's gracious purpose, they justify neither the resentment of the saint, nor the crime of the emperor.

St. Paul, in directing his instructions, first to the Jewish sojourners in the heathen cities, bequeathed an important lesson to all reformers,—that the most extensive plans of doing good to strangers should be accompanied with the most unabated zeal at home; and that natural connections have the prior, though not the exclusive claim to their services.

If in the first promulgation of the Gospel-message, the apostle showed a regard to the rights of the Jewish nation, in his subsequent conduct on every possible occasion, he consults even their prejudices. At all times he showed as much respect for their religion as was consistent with that which he now professed; always studiously endeavoring to obviate objection, and to cut off every plausible ground of complaint. Thus, in treating with deference the Jewish laws and usages, though virtually abrogated, he loudly instructs us that temperance is not to be swallowed up by zeal; that it may be prudent for a time, to let some inferior errors alone, yet not without intimation or implication that they are errors; that premature attacks upon the lesser, may obstruct the removal of the greater. And in other cases we may learn, that though extirpation may be indis-
pensably necessary, yet it may, under certain circumstances, be better effected by the gradual process of successive strokes, than by laying at the first blow the axe to the root.

A lesson of discreet kindness may also be learned from the same example in the domestic walks of life. If pious young persons do not patiently bear with any averseness in a parent or a friend from that serious spirit which they themselves have been happily brought to entertain; moroseness and ill-humored opposition will not only increase the distaste, instead of recommending a religion, of which their own temper affords so unamiable and so unfair a specimen.

It was the same discretion which led Paul at one time to confer on Timothy* the initiatory rite of the Jewish church, because his mother was of Jewish extraction; and at another, induced him to forbid Titus undergoing the same ceremony, because his origin was Pagan.† The one was allowed, to avoid doing violence to Jewish prejudices; the other prohibited, lest the Gentile convert should be taught to place his dependence on any thing but the Saviour. He inflexibly resisted granting this introductory rite to Pagan converts. Though this union of candor with firmness is a very exemplary part of his character, it has not escaped the charge of inconsistency. But he thought it was acting in a more Christian spirit, to continue, in different instances, his conformity to ancient usages; than by a violent opposition to mere forms, to irritate persons, some of whom conscientiously persevered in them.

Perhaps no quality has been more fatal to the interests of Christianity than prejudice. It is the moral cataract of the human mind. In vain the meridian sun of truth darts his full beams. The mental eye is impervious to the strongest ray. When religion is to be assailed, prejudice knows how to blend antipathies. It leagued those mutual enemies Herod and Pontius Pilate in one common cause. It led the Jews to prefer the robber to the Saviour. Though they abhorred the Roman yoke, yet rather than Jesus shall escape, "they will have no king but Cæsar." At Jerusalem it had united the bigot Pharisee and the infidel Saddu- cee against Paul, till his declaration that he was of the former class, by exciting a party-spirit, suspended, but did not extinguish their fury. At Athens it combined, in one joint opposition, two sects, the most discordant in sentiment and practice. When truth was to be attacked, the rigid stoic could unite with the voluptuous epicurean.

Prejudice had not only blinded the understanding of the

* Acts, xvi. 3.
† Gal. ii
Jews, so as to prevent their receiving the truth, but led them to violate it, by asserting a glaring falsehood. When our Lord told them that "if they would know the truth the truth would make them free,"—as they had no idea of spiritual freedom, so of civil liberty they had nothing to boast. But, exasperated at any offer of deliverance, because it implied subjugation, they indignantly replied, "we were never in bondage to any man," though it was notorious that they had been bond-slaves in Egypt, captives in Babylon, and were, at the very moment of this proud boast, tributary to the Romans.

Ignorance and prejudice respecting religion can never be fairly pleaded in excuse by minds cultivated by diligent inquiry on other subjects. Paul, indeed, says, that, though a persecutor, he obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly. The apology from him is valid, for he does not offer the plea for ignorance and prejudice, till he was cured of both. His sincerity appears in his abandoning his error, his humility in confessing it. Our spiritual strength is increased by the retrospection of our former faults. This remembrance left a compassionate feeling for the errors of others on the impressionable heart of St. Paul. Perhaps in his early mad career against the Church of Christ, he might be permitted to carry it to such lengths, to afford a proof that omnipotence can subdue even prejudice!

It is a melancholy feature in the character of the human mind, that St. Paul met with less mercy from his brethren, among whom he had been bred, and whose religion approached so much nearer to that which he had adopted, than from the higher class of the Pagans, who stood at the farthest possible distance from it. Caiaphas, Ananias, Tertullus, and the whole Sanhedrin, were far more violent than Lysias, Felix, Festus, Gallio, the town-clerk of Ephesus, or the rulers of Thessalonica.

Even on that awful occasion, when prejudice did its worst, the Roman judge who condemned the Saviour of the world, was more candid than the high priest, who delivered him up. While the Jews cried, Crucify! the governor declared "he found no fault in him:" and, but for the suppleness and venality of his character, would have protected the life which he sacrificed to Jewish bigotry. While Pilate deliberated, Caiaphas cut the matter short on the plea of expediency*—"it is expedient that one man should die for the people." In this high priest the doctrine found a patron worthy of itself.

*John, xviii. 14
There was in the Divine Sufferer a veiled majesty; there was a mysterious grandeur thrown round his character; there were glimpses of grandeur breaking through the obscurity in which he was shrouded, which excited a curiosity not unmingled with fear in the great ones of the earth. It was a grand illustration of that solemn indistinctness which is said to be one cause of the sublime. Both Herod and Pilate were surprised into something like an involuntary respect, mixed with a vague apprehension of they knew not what.

But to return from this too long digression, for which the only apology that can be offered, is, that the uniform temper and conduct of St. Paul with the Jews, was eminently calculated to parry every objection that had any show of reason, and to remove every prejudice which was not invincible.

In the case of Paul, Agrippa appears to have been the only Jew in authority who ever manifested any show of candor towards him. Even the offended Athenians were so far affected with his discourse, as to betray their emotion by saying, "We will hear thee again on this matter;" thus civilly softening rejection into procrastination;—while there is scarcely an instance of any Jewish people, as a body, fairly inquiring into the truth of the Christian doctrine with a real desire of information.

The Bereans, indeed, offer an honorable exception, and are accordingly distinguished by one, who rarely employs epithets, the biographer of St. Paul, with the appellation of "noble." This thinking people did not lightly embrace the new religion without inquiry, but received it upon rational examination, daily searching the Scriptures; thus presenting us with an example of that union of faith and reason which constitutes the character of a sound Christian.

Though the Gentiles were ready to oppose St. Paul wherever he came, we do not find that they pursued him with hostility from one city to another, as the Jews of Thessalonica did, in following him to Berea, to excite a persecution against him.

The temper to which allusion has been made, is not, it is to be feared, quite extinct. Are there not, at this favored period of light and knowledge, some Christians by profession, who manifest more hostility towards those who are laboring to procure instruction for the Hindoos, than towards Hindooism itself? Are not shades of our own color looked at with a more jealous eye, than a color of
the most opposite character? and is not the remark too nearly founded in experience; that approximation rather inflames than cools; that nearness aggravates because it is not identity? If, like the apostle, a man is impelled by his conscience to act against the opinion of those with whom he desires to live well; to obey the impulse, as it is a severe trial of his feelings, so it is a surer test of his integrity, than to expose himself to the censure of his enemies; of their hostility he was assured before; he is, in the other case, risking the loss of his friends.

St. Paul's prudence, under the divine direction, led him to adopt very different measures in his intercourse with the Jews and with the Gentiles; measures suggested by the different condition of the two classes, both in their civil and religious circumstances. To the one, the very name of Messiah was unknown; of the other, he was both the glory and the shame. To the one true God in whom they fully believed, they were to add the reception of Jesus Christ. "He came to his own," but his own, so far from receiving, crucified him. Subsequently to this event, Paul labored to convince them, that this was the Saviour promised, first by God himself, then by a long and unbroken succession of the very prophets whom they professed to venerate. With these adversaries, therefore, he had substantial grounds on which to expostulate; analogies, from which to argue; promises, which they believed; predictions, of which they had expected the accomplishment; and, to leave them without the shadow of excuse, he had to plead the actual recent fulfilment of these predictions.

But with the Gentiles he had no common ground on which to stand, no references to which to send them, no analogies from which to reason, except indeed the visible works of creation and providence. He did what a profound thinker of our own country has since done more in detail: he showed them the analogy of revealed religion with the constitution and course of nature.* In this he had, as it were, to address their senses rather than their intellect or their knowledge, great as were both,—for their wisdom had served only to lead them wider from the mark.

As they were little acquainted with first principles, he had with them no middle way to take. He could not improve upon polytheism; there was no such thing as mending idolatry; it was not a building to be repaired; it must be demolished; no materials were to be picked out from its ruins towards the construction of the everlasting edifice;

* Bishop Butler.
the rubbish must be rolled away. A clear stage must be left for the new order of things; with this order it had no compatibilities; old things were past away, all things must become new.

The Sun of Righteousness which was to absorb the faint, but not false, lights of Judaism, was utterly to dispel the darkness of Paganism. One of the Roman emperors (most of whom thought that they could not have too many gods, nor too little religion) would have added Jesus to the number of their deities. Paul abhorred any such compromise. "We know," says he, "an idol is nothing in the world." Such an association, therefore, would not be of good and bad, but of every thing with nothing. Christianity would not accept of any thing short of the annihilation of the whole mythologic rabble.

The new economy was now to take place. The fundamental doctrine of one God over all blessed for ever, which had been long familiar to the Jew, was at length to be made known to the heathen, with the participation in common with the Jew, of salvation by his Son. The partition wall was taken down for ever.

Paul however retained, to the end of his ministry, a cordial kindness for "his brethren after the flesh." His heart's desire and prayer for Israel was, that they might be saved,—for the rose of Sharon was grafted on the stem of David. Not only the same God was to be worshipped by both, but "Jesus whom he had sent;" while Paganism lay prostrate, never more to rise from its ruins. It is a remarkable circumstance, that while to this day surviving Israel remains without a temple, the surviving Pantheon remains without a worshipper.

CHAP. VIII.

St. Paul's Judgment in his intercourse with the Pagans.

It is among the mysteries of Christianity, that the preaching of Jesus made so few converts, and his death so many. The more affecting were his discourses, the stronger was the indignation they excited; the deeper was the anxiety which he expressed for the salvation of men, so much the more vehemently were they exasperated against him; the more merciful were his miracles, so much the
faster did they accelerate his ignominious catastrophe. "Did not this prove," says the eloquent Bossuet, "that not his words, but his cross was to bring all men to Him? Does it not prove that the power of his persuasion consisted in the shedding of his blood?" This he himself predicted —"And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Were it not for this reason, it would be astonishing to our shallow wisdom, that the Author of Christianity made so few proselytes to his own faith, and his apostles so many. That the disciple who denied him should, after the descent of the Holy Spirit, awaken, by a single sermon, the consciences of three thousand auditors; and that the persecutor, who reviled him, should become, under the influence of the same Divine Spirit, the mighty instrument of the conversion of the Pagan world.

If St. Paul had declined visiting the learned and polished regions of Greece, it might have been produced against him, that he carefully avoided those cultivated cities where men were best able to judge of the consistency of the Gospel doctrines with its precepts, and of the truth of those miracles by which its divinity was confirmed. The Greeks might have urged it as an argument against Paul's integrity, that he confined his preaching to the countries which they called barbarous, knowing they would be less acute in discovering inconsistencies, and more easily imposed upon by impostures which men of liberal education would have immediately detected. His visiting every city famous for literature, science, and philosophy, would also be a complete refutation of any such charge in after ages. "Because," says a judicious commentator, "if upon an accurate examination, great numbers of men embraced the Gospel, who were best qualified to judge of its nature and evidences, their conversion would render it indubitable in after times, that the Gospel was supported by those great and undeniable miracles which were performed in every country by the preachers of Christianity; so that no person might hereafter suspect that idolatry was destroyed and Christianity established merely through the simplicity and ignorance of the people among whom it was first preached."*

St. Paul was with more propriety selected to be the apostle of the Gentiles, than if he had been of Gentile extraction; none but a teacher, educated as he had been, under an eminent Jewish doctor, would have been so competent to produce, before both Jews and Gentiles, proofs

*Macknight on the Life of St. Paul
that the miracles, sufferings, and death of Jesus happened in exact conformity to the predictions of those prophets of whom the Jews had perfect knowledge, and to whom, though the Gentiles previously knew them not, yet it is probable that he afterwards for their fuller confirmation would refer them.

There appears to have been a considerable difference between St. Paul’s reception among the Jewish and Gentile populace. Among the former, the “common people, who had heard Jesus gladly,” must have had their prejudices softened, and in many instances removed; even those, probably, who were not converted, had seen and heard of his miracles with astonishment. They were also witnesses of the wonderful effects produced by St. Peter’s sermon. Their minds were become so favorably disposed, that, after the miracle wrought by Peter and John, the enraged council did not venture to punish them, “because of the people, for all men glorified God for that which was done.”

While the heathen governors seem, in their transactions with St. Paul, less intolerant than the Jewish Sanhedrim, the heathen multitude appear to have been more furious than the Jewish. The Jewish leaders had a personal hatred to Christ; the Gentile community had a national hatred to the Jews. If a party among the Jews detested the Christians, the Pagans as a body despised the Jews, whilst they would consider Christianity but as a new modification of an antiquated and degrading superstition, made worse by the offensive addition of certain tenets, still more unphilosophical and incredible than were taught under the old dispensation. The contempt of the Gentiles was founded on their ignorance of the true religion of Judaism, and that again had prevented any inquiry into their opinions. From the prejudiced pen of Tacitus, and the sarcastic muse of Juvenal, we see the disdain in which they were held. The great writers, only less culpable than modern infidels, like them collected a string of misrepresentations, and then turned into ridicule the system of their own invention.

The philosophers, who disagree each with the other, all join in the contemning more especially one doctrine of Christianity, which every sect alike conceived to be the most inconsistent with their own tenets, and the most contradictory to general philosophical principles,—the resurrection of the body, which they contemptuously called the hope of worms.

* Acts, chap. 4.
The Pagan magistrates looked with a jealous eye upon all innovators: not indeed so much from an aversion to any novelty of religious opinion, (for to this they were so indifferent as to make little objection to any mode of worship which did not seek to subvert their own;) but, through the machinations of the mercenary priests, who, fearful of any invasion of their corrupt establishment, any detection of their frauds, any disclosure of their mysteries, any danger of their altars, their auguries, their profitable oracles, and above all, any abridgement of their political influence; excited the civil governors against Paul by the stale artifice of insinuating that his designs were hostile to the state.

The artisans who enriched themselves by the occupation of making the symbols of idolatry, found that, by the contempt into which their deities were likely to be brought, their craft would not only be endangered, but destroyed. This conviction, more perhaps than any zeal for their own religion, served to influence them also against that of St. Paul. And finally the populace, who liked the easy and pleasant way of appeasing their divinities by shows and pageants, and ceremonies, and lustral days, were unwilling to lose their holidays, and all the decorations and pleasures which distinguished them, and did not care to exchange this gay and amusing religion for the spiritual, sober, and unostentatious worship of the Christians.

There was therefore no disposition in any class of society to receive the doctrines of the Gospel, or to forgive the intrusion of its teachers. Paul, unsupported, unfriended, had to open his own commission to audiences backed by multitudes, protected by power, patronised by learning, countenanced by the national priesthood. It was a far more unequal contest than that of David and Goliath; for, besides the people, he had to combat with the giants of Areopagus. But greater was He that was for him, than they who were against him.

Had he not been an adept in the knowledge of human nature, how could there have been, in his diversified discourses, such an adaptation to the moral wants of men? His superiority in this respect appears not only in his general knowledge of man in the abstract, but in his acquaintance with life and manners, in what we call knowledge of the world; in his scrupulous observance of time and place, in his admirable judgment in so skilfully accommodating his discourses to the condition, character, and circumstances of the persons whom he addressed. To some he applied as to decided enemies to Christianity; to
others as utterly unacquainted with its nature, and ignorant of its design, but not averse from inquiring into its truth. He always carefully distinguished between the errors of the followers of religion and the sins of her adversaries. To some he addressed himself as awakened, to others, as enlightened, to many as sincere, but to none as perfect.

The various powers of his opulent mind he exercised with a wise appropriation to the genius of those whom he addressed. With the Jews "he reasoned;" with the Athenian controvertists "he disputed;" at Ephesus "he boldly disputed and persuaded."

The apostle's zeal was never cooled by the improbability of success. He knew that what seemed hopeless to men was not impossible to God. Even at Paphos, where the most impure worship was offered to the most impure deity, he made a most important convert in the proconsul himself.* This wise governor holds out an example to men in high public stations; he suffered not himself to be influenced by report, or duped by misrepresentation; he would hear with his own ears "the word of God" which Paul preached, and see with his own eyes the miracle which confirmed it.

In his preaching at Antioch,† he introduces his great commission to the Gentiles in the most dignified and masterly manner, referring the Jewish auditors to the striking passages of their national history; to the prophecies and their fulfilment: to the attestation of the Baptist; to Christ's death and resurrection. He ends with a most awful peroration; "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish;" and then, with a measured sternness which nothing could shake, he makes the disclosure of that grand scheme, of Almighty goodness, the scheme of proclaiming to the Gentiles that Gospel which the chosen people to whom it had been offered, so contumeliously rejected. How striking the contrast of manner in which these words of the apostle were received by the two classes of hearers!—the envy and malignity, "the contradictions and blasphemies of the Jews;" the joyful gratitude with which the heathen "glorified the word of the Lord," at the annunciation of a blessing so vast and so unexpected!

To the people of Lystra his address is short, plain, and simple, yet passionate and energetic: so plain, as to be not only understood, but felt by the meanest auditor; yet so powerful, that when aided by a miracle of mercy, which

* Sergius Paulus.
† Acts ch. 13.
he wrought before them, he scarcely restrained them from offering him divine honors. His appearance before Felix having been more largely detailed by the sacred historian, we may well be allowed a more particular consideration of it. Heavens historians represent Felix as having, by every kind of misconduct, excited disturbances in Judea, and by exactions and oppressions obtained the contempt of his subjects, to whom he had occasioned great calamities; his mal-administration, but for the intervention of the governor of Syria, would have kindled a war; and an instance of it indeed occurs on the very occasion of which we are about to speak, in Paul’s long detention in confinement. It is recorded in the Acts, that he hoped the apostle would have bribed him with money, in order to procure his escape.∗

Let us now contrast the different conduct of the popular advocate retained by the Jews against Paul, with that of Paul himself, towards this corrupt governor. Tertullus, a florid speaker, is not ashamed, in the true spirit of party oratory, to offer the grossest adulation to this wicked judge; not only extolling what he knew to be false,—the tranquillity produced by his administration, and "the worthy deeds" done by him,—but even exalting him into a sort of deity, by whose providence their prosperity was procured. Then, in the usual strain of artful and disingenuous adulation, having already exceeded all bounds of decency, he finishes his harangue by hypocritically expressing his fears that praise "might be tedious to him."

After the affected declamation of this rhetorical parasite, how are we refreshed with the wise, temperate, and simple defence of the apostle! Instead of loading Tertullus with reproaches for the infamous charges of heresy and sedition brought against himself, he maintains a dignified silence till the governor "beckoned to him to speak." He then enters upon his vindication without a single invective against his accusers, and what is still more honorable to his own character, without a single compliment to his judge, though well aware that his liberty, and even his life, were in his hands. Unjust as Felix was, the charges against Paul were too flagrantly false to mislead him, and the noble simplicity of the prisoner’s defence carried in it something so convincing to the understanding of the judge, that he durst not act upon the allegations of the accuser, nor condemn the innocent.

At a subsequent meeting, Paul seemed more intent to

alarm the conscience of the governor, than he had previously been to assert his own integrity. Felix, ever presenting us with the idea of a bad mind, ill at ease with itself; sends for Paul, and desires to "hear him concerning the faith of Christ." Charmed, no doubt, with the occasion given him, Paul uses it widely. He does not embark on topics irrelevant to the immediate case of his auditors, nor by personal reproof does he expose himself to the charge of contumacy. He never loses sight of the respect due to the judge's office, but still, as he knew the venality and profligacy with which he administered that office, together with the licentious character of his wife, who was present, he reasoned, not declaimed; he "reasoned" on the virtues in which he knew they were so shamefully deficient —rightness and temperance; and then, doubtless with the dignity of one who was himself to "judge angels," closed his discourse with referring these notorious violators of both duties to the judgment to come.

The result of this discourse is the best evidence of the power of his reasonings. Conscience-struck, Felix trembled. The judge dissolved the court, dismissed the prisoner, withheld the sentence, deferred the further trial to an indefinite time,—which time he contrived should never arrive,—till both were cited to appear together before the mighty Judge of quick and dead. Paul throughout maintains his character, and Felix adds one to the numberless instances in which strong convictions not being followed up, only serve to enhance guilt and aggravate condemnation.

To the inhabitants of Ephesus, his reasoning and his persuasive powers are alternately exercised. In his conduct in this place we incidentally discover a singular instance of his discretion in avoiding to excite unnecessary irritation. He found in the Ephesians a strong devotion to one particular idol; yet it is intimated, in a candid speech of their chief magistrate, that he had neither reviled their great goddess, Diana, nor profaned their temples. We may, therefore, fairly presume that he contented himself with preaching against idolatry in general, instead of endeavoring to excite the popular indignation by inveighing against the local idol.†

It is not the meanest of the triumphs of incipient Christianity; that at this place the professors of forbidden arts brought out their costly professional books, the registers of their unlawful mysteries, and burnt them, giving a

* Acts, 19.
striking proof of the sincerity of their conversion, by thus putting it out of their power to repeat their impious incantations; their destroying them in the presence of the people, was a triple sacrifice of their prejudices, their credit, and their profit. What an example have they left to those who, though professing Christianity, give birth, or afford encouragement, to profane or profilitig books, which, though of a different character from those of the Ephesian sorcerers, possess a magic power over the mind of the reader, not less pernicious in itself, and far more extensive in its influence.*

St. Paul's good sense, and may we be permitted to say, his good taste—qualities we could rather wish than expect to see always brought to the service of religion,—were eminently displayed in his examination at Cesarea. While his pleading before the royal audience and other persons of dignity and station, exhibits a fine specimen of wisdom and good breeding, it exhibits it without the smallest sacrifice of principle, or the least abatement of truth. At once, his doctrines are scriptural, and his language is classical. On this occasion, as upon all others, conscious dignity is mingled with politeness; an air, carrying with it the authority of truth, with the gentleness of Christianity, pervades all he says and does.

This admirable conduct has extorted, even from that eloquent rhapsodist, the skeptical author† of "the Characteristics," a confession, "how handsomely Paul accommodates himself to the apprehension and temper of those polite people, the witty Athenians, and the Roman court of judicature, in the presence of their great men and ladies." At this last-named memorable audience, with what admirable temper does he preserve his reverence for constituted authorities, while he boldly recapitulates those passages in his former life which were naturally calculated to give offence.—His preliminary compliment to Agrippa was judicially conceived in a manner to procure attention to his projected defence, without in any sense deserving the name of flattery, or in any degree compromising the truth he meant to deliver. While it answered its proper end, it served as an attestation of his own veracity and of the truth

* When the French revolution had brought to light the fatal consequences of some of Voltaire's writings, some half-scrupulous persons, no longer willing to afford his fourscore volumes a place in their library, sold them at a low price. This measure, though it "stayed the plague" in their own houses, caused the infection to spread wider. The Ephesian magicians made no such compromise; they burnt theirs.

† Lord Shaftesbury.
of Christianity; for in complimenting the king on the knowledge of the facts to which he referred him, he laid himself open to immediate detection if the circumstances had not been strictly correct, affording, "a remarkable proof," says Lord Lyttleton, "both of the notoriety of the fact and the integrity of the man, who, with so fearless a confidence, could call upon a king to give testimony for him, while he was sitting in judgment upon him."

The whole defence is as rational as it is elegant. The self-possession, the modest intrepidity, and the pertinent choice of matter, furnish a model for innocent sufferers under similar circumstances.

As on the one hand it is a great hardship for an accused person to have to plead before ignorance and prejudice, so on the other it was not more just than polite and prudent, for Paul to begin by expressing his satisfaction that he should at least be tried by a judge, who, from his knowledge, his education, and his habits, was competent to determine on the cause. While he scruples not to declare the inveterate prejudices, the blindness, and persecuting spirit of his former life, he does ample justice to his own character as a scholar and a moralist. Well as he knew that his piety would not clear him at the tribunal before which he stood, yet the fair justification of himself from the crimes laid to his charge, was due, not only to his own character, but to the religion which he professed.

Having been himself brought to embrace Christianity by no powers of reasoning, by no trains of argument, he allowed himself either to employ or neglect them at discretion, in addressing these assemblies. On the present occasion he limits himself to matter of fact, and seems to think a statement of his own conversion would be more likely to impress a judge "expert in all customs and questions which were among the Jews." He insisted dogmatically but on one point, the great doctrine of the resurrection, for asserting which he had been so often assailed; and he asks, why should it be thought a thing incredible? This, however, he does not argue; perhaps conscious of having so amply stated, and so argumentatively defended it in his epistolary writings, now sufficiently known.

Festus, with that scorn which any allusion to his tenet never failed to excite, impatiently interrupted him, but with a reproof which had more of irony than anger, as if he thought his credulity rather the effect of insanity than of wickedness, the object of ridicule rather than of censure. This irritating charge, however, did not make Paul forget
the respect due to the place which Festus filled; and while he vindicated the soundness of his own intellect and the sobriety of his doctrine, he did not fail to address the governor by the honorable appellation of "most noble," to which his dignity entitled him. His example in this respect, as in all other particulars, was of an instructive nature; teaching us to separate the civility of speech due to office from the respect due only to personal character, and justify the modern titles and epithets of reverence which have occasioned so much discussion in many of our public forms.

The apostle's speech had produced a considerable emotion in the king, who, however, was determined to act rather upon his convenience than his convictions. The apostle concludes as he had begun, by seizing on the part of Agrippa's character which he could most conscientiously commend, his perfect knowledge of the subject before the court. In his solemn interrogation at the close, "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets?'' more is meant than meets the ear; for, if he really believed the prophets, could he refuse to believe the accomplishment of their predictions? His emphatical answer to his own question, "I know that thou believest,'" drew from the startled monarch a free avowal of his partial convictions. The brief but affecting prayer with which the trial closes, is as elegantly turned as if the apostle had been the courtier.

Agrippa appears, in this instance, in a light so much more advantageous than any of the other judges before whom either Paul or his Lord were cited, that we cannot but regret that he let slip an occasion so providentially put in his way. This illustrious person affords another awful proof of the danger of stifling convictions, postponing inquiries, and neglecting opportunities.

Though the political and military splendor of Athens had declined, and the seat of government, after the conquest of Greece by the Romans, was transferred to Corinth, yet her sun of glory was not set. Philosophy and the liberal arts were still carefully cultivated; students in every department, and from every quarter, resorted thither for improvement, and her streets were crowded by senators and rhetoricians, philosophers and statesmen.

As Paul visited Athens with views which had instigated no preceding, and would probably be entertained by no subsequent traveller, so his attention in that most interesting city was attracted by objects far different from theirs. He was in all probability qualified to range, with a learned
eye, over the exquisite pieces of art, and to consult and enjoy the curious remains of literature,—theatres, and temples, and schools of philosophy, sepulchres, and cenotaphs, statues of patriots, and portraits of heroes;—monuments by which the artist had insured to himself the immortality he was conferring. Yet one edifice alone arrested the apostle's notice,—the altar of the idolatrous worshippers. One record of antiquity alone invited his critical acumen,—

THE INSCRIPTION TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

The disposition of this people, their passion for disputation, their characteristic and proverbial love of novelty, had drawn together a vast assembly. Many of the philosophical sects eagerly joined the audience. Curiosity is called by an ancient writer, the wantonness of knowledge. These critics came, it is likely, not as inquirers, but as spies. The grave stoics probably expected to hear some new unbroken doctrines which they might overthrow by argument; the lively epicureans some fresh absurdity in religion, which would afford a new field for diversion; the citizens, perhaps, crowding and listening from the mere motive that they might afterwards have to tell the new thing they should hear. Paul took advantage of their curiosity. As he habitually opened his discourses with great moderation, we are the less surprised at the measured censure, or rather the implied civility of his introduction. The ambiguous term "superstitious" which he employed, might be either construed into respect for their spirit of religious inquiry, or into disapprobation of its unreasonable excess; at least he intimated that they were so far from not reverencing the acknowledged gods, that they worshipped one which was "unknown."

With his usual discriminating mind, he did not "reason" with these elegant and learned Polytheists "out of the Scriptures," of which they were totally ignorant, as he had done at Antioch and Cesarea, before judges who were trained in the knowledge of them: he addressed his present auditors with an eloquent exposition of natural religion, and of the providential government of God, politely illustrating his observations by citing passages from one of their own authors. Even by this quotation, without having recourse to Scripture, he was able to controvert the epicurean doctrine, that the Deity had no interference with human concerns; showing them on their own principles, that "we are the offspring of God;" that "in Him we live and move, and have our being;" and it is worth observing,
that he could select from a poet, sentiments which should come nearer to the truth than from a philosopher.

The orator, rising with his subject, after briefly touching on the long suffering of God, awfully announced that ignorance would be no longer any plea for idolatry; that if the divine forbearance had permitted it so long, it was in order to make the wisest not only see, but feel the insufficiency of their own wisdom, in what related to the great concerns of religion; but he now commanded all men every where to repent. He concludes by announcing the solemnities of Christ's future judgment, and the resurrection from the dead.

In considering St. Paul's manner of unfolding to these wits and sages the power and goodness of that Supreme Intelligence who was the object of their 'ignorant worship,' we are at once astonished at his intrepidity and his management; intrepidity, in preferring this bold charge against an audience of the most accomplished scholars in the world,—in charging ignorance upon Athens! blindness on 'the eye of Greece!''—and management in so judiciously conducting his oration, that the audience expressed neither impatience nor displeasure, till he began to unfold the most obnoxious and unpopular of all doctrines,—Jesus raised from the dead.

It is recorded by St. Luke of this polished and highly intellectual city, that it was wholly given up to idolatry; a confirmation of the remark of Pausanias, that there were more image-worshippers in Athens than in all Greece besides.

We have here a clear proof that the reasonableness of Christianity was no recommendation to its adoption by those people who, of all others, were acknowledged to have cultivated reason the most highly. What a melancholy and heart-humbling conviction, that wit and learning, in their loftiest elevation, open no natural avenue to religion in the heart of man; that the grossest ignorance leaves it not more inaccessible to divine truth. Paul never appears to have made so few proselytes in any place as at Athens; and it is so far from being true, as its disciples assert, that philosophy is never intolerant, that the most bitter persecution ever inflicted on the Christians was under the most philosophical of all the Roman emperors.*

In this celebrated city, in which Plato, near five hundred years before, discoursed so eloquently on the immortality of the soul, Paul first preached the resurrection of the body. Horace speaks of searching for truth in the groves of Academus. But St. Paul was the first who ever taught it there.

* Marcus Aurelius.
CHAP. IX.

* On the general principles of St. Paul's Writings.

One of the most distinguished writers of antiquity, says, that "one man may believe himself to be as certain of his error as another of his truth." How many illustrious ancients, under the influence of this conceit, may either have carried truth out of its proper sphere, or brought on some error to fill the place where the truth, so transferred, had left vacant. The Pagan philosophers held so great a variety of opinions of the supreme good of the nature of man, that one of their most learned writers is said to have reckoned the number to amount to no less than two hundred and eighty-eight.*

Christianity ought to be accounted a singular blessing, were it only that it has simplified this conjectural arithmetical, and reduced the hundreds to a unit. St. Paul's brief, but comprehensive definition, "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," forming one grand central point, in which, if all the vain aims and unsatisfied desires of the anxious philosophers do not meet, this succinct character of Christianity abundantly supplies what their aims and desires failed to accomplish; for "they erred, not knowing the Scriptures: those Scriptures which proclaim the wants of man when they declare his depravity, and the power of God, in providing its only remedy."

St. Paul labors sedulously to convince his converts of the apostasy of the human race. He knew this to be the only method of rendering the Scriptures either useful or intelligible; no other book having explicitly proclaimed or circumstantially unfolded this prime truth. He furnishes his followers with this key, that they might both unlock the otherwise hidden treasures of the Bible, and open the secret recesses of their own hearts. He knew that, without this strict inquisition into what was passing within, without this experimental knowledge of their own lapsed state, the best books may be read with little profit, and even prayer be offered up with little effect.

He directs them to follow up this self-inspection, because without it they could not determine on the quality, even of their best actions. "Examine yourselves; prove your own selves," is his frequent exhortation. He knew, that if we

* Varro.
did not impede the entrance of Divine light into our own hearts, it would show us many an unsuspected corruption; that it would not only disclose existing evils, but awaken the remembrance of former ones, of which perhaps the consequences still remain, though time and negligence have effaced the act itself from the memory. Whatever be the structure they intend to erect, the apostles always dig deep for a foundation before they begin to build. "On Jesus Christ, and him crucified," as on a broad basis, St. Paul builds all doctrine and grounds all practice; and firm indeed, must that foundation be, which has to sustain such a weight. He points to him as the sole author of justifying faith. From this doctrine he derives all sanctity, all duty, and all consolation. After having proved it to be productive of that most solid of all supports, peace with God; this peace he promises, not only through the benignity of God, but through the grace of Christ, showing, by an induction of particulars, the process of this love of God in its moral effects,—how afflictions promote "patience," how patience fortifies the mind by "experience," and how experience generates "hope;"—reverting always in the end to that point from which he sets out; to that love of God, which is kindled in the heart by the operation of the Holy Spirit.

He makes all true holiness to hinge on this fundamental doctrine of redemption by the Son of God, never separating his offices from his person, nor his example from his propitiation; never teaching that man’s nature is to be reformed, without pointing out the instrument, and the manner by which the reformation is to be effected. For one great excellence of St. Paul’s writings, consists, not only in his demonstrating to us the riches and the glories of Christ, but in showing how they may be conveyed to us: how we may become possessed of an interest, of a right in them.

Though there is no studied separations of the doctrinal from the practical parts of his Epistles, they who would enter most deeply into a clear apprehension of the former, would best do it by a strict obedience to the precepts of the latter. He every where shows, that the way to receive the truth is to obey it; and the way to obey is to love it. Nothing so effectually bars up the heart and even the understanding, against the reception of truth, as the practice of sin. "If any man will do his will," says the Divine Teacher himself, "he shall know of the doctrine."*

It is in this practical application of Divine truth, that the supreme excellence of St. Paul’s preaching consists.

* John vii. 17.
Whenever he has been largely expatiating on the glorious privileges of believers, he never omits to guard his doctrine from the use to which he probably foresaw loose professors might convert it, if delivered to the uninformed, stripped from the connection with its proper adjunct.*

Thus, his doctrines are never barely theoretical. He hedges them in, as we have elsewhere observed, with the whole circle of duties, or with such as more immediately grow out of his subject, whether they relate to God, to others, or ourselves. Though it would not be easy to produce, in his writings, a single doctrine which is not so protected, nevertheless, perhaps, there is scarcely one, in the adoption of which, bold intruders have not leaped over the fence he raised; or by their negligence laid it bare for the unhallowed entrance of others, converting his closure into a waste. If the duty of living righteously, soberly, and godly, was ever pre-eminently taught by any instructor, that instructor is St. Paul; if ever the instructions of any teacher have been strained or perverted, they are his. But if he never presses any virtue, as independent of faith, which is too much the case with some, he never fails to press it as a consequence of faith, which is sometimes neglected by others. • The one class preach faith as if it were an insulated doctrine; the other, virtue, as if it were a self-originating principle.

It is also worthy of observation, that in that complete code of evangelical law, the twelfth chapter of the Romans, after unfolding with the most lucid clearness, the great truths of our religion, he carefully inculcates the \textit{temper} it demands, before he proceeds to enforce the duties it imposes; that we must be “holy” before we can be “acceptable;” that we must be transformed in the renewing of our mind, is at once made a consequence of the grace of God, and a preliminary to our duties towards our fellow creatures. We must offer up “\textit{ourselves} a living sacrifice to God,” before we are directed to act conscientiously to man. The other disposition, which he names as an indispensable prelude, is humility; for in the very opening of his subject, he prefaces it with an injunction, \textit{not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think}. To omit to cultivate the spirit in which doctrines are to be embraced, and the temper in which duties are to be performed, is to

* We learn from St. Peter, that this perversion had begun even in his own time. Ebion and his followers afterwards pushed the charge against Paul as far as antinomianism. Nor has the spirit of the accusation on the one hand, nor the adulteration of the principle on the other, entirely ceased.
mutilate Christianity, and to rob it of its appropriate character and its highest grace. After having shown the means for the acquisition of virtue, he teaches us diligently to solicit that divine aid, without which all means are ineffectual, and all virtues spurious.

In this invaluable summary, or rather this spirit of Christian laws, there is scarcely any class of persons, to which some appropriate exhortation is not directed. After particularly addressing those who fill different degrees of the ministerial office, he proceeds to the more general instructions in which all are equally interested. Here, again, he does not fail to introduce his documents with some powerful principle. Affection and sincerity are the inward feelings which must regulate action; "let love be without dissimulation."

The love he inculcates is of the most large and liberal kind; compassion to the indigent, tender sympathy with the feelings of others, whether of joy or sorrow, as their respective circumstances require; the duties of friendship and hospitality are not forgotten; condescension to inferiors; a disposition to be at peace with all men is enforced; from his deep knowledge of the human heart, implying, however, by a significant parenthesis—*if it be possible*—the difficulty, if not impossibility, which its corruptions would bring to the establishment of universal discord.

He applies himself to all the tender sensibilities of the heart, and concatenates the several fruits of charity so closely, from being aware how ready people are to deceive themselves on this article, and to make one branch of this comprehensive grace stand proxy for another: he knew that many are disposed to make almsgiving a ground for neglecting the less pleasant parts of charity; that some give, in order that they may rail, and think that while they open their purses, they need put no restraint on their tongues.

He closes his catalogue of duties with those which we owe to our enemies; and in a paradox peculiar to the genius of Christianity, shows that the revengeful are the conquered, and those who have the magnanimity to forgive, the conquerors. He exhorts to this new and heroic species of victory over evil, not merely by exhibiting patience under it, but by overcoming its assaults with good. Could this conquest over nature, which soars far above mere forgiveness, be obtained by any other power but the supernatural strength previously communicated?

Thus he every where demonstrates, that the maxims of the morality he inculcates, are derived from a full founta,
and fed by perennial supplies. When he speaks of human virtue, he never disconnects it from divine influence. When he recommends the "perfecting holiness," it must be done "in the fear of the Lord." He shows that there is no other way of conquering the love of the world, the allurements of pleasure, and the predominance of selfishness, but by seeking a conformity to the image of God, as well as by aiming at obedience to his law.

That ignorance is the mother of devotion, has been the axiom of a superstitious church; nor is the votary of fanaticism less apt to despise knowledge than the slave of superstition.

The first thing that God formed in nature was light. This preliminary blessing disclosed the other beauties of his creation, which had else remained as unseen as if they had remained uncreated. By that analogy which runs through his works, his first operation on the heart is bestowing on it the light of his grace. Amidst the causes of the corruption, the darkness of ignorance is scarcely to be distinguished from that of sin.

Such indeed is the condition of man in his present state, that he ought to labor indefatigably under the divine teaching, to recover some glimpses of that intellectual worth which he lost when he forfeited his spiritual excellence. Religious men should be diligent in obtaining knowledge, or they will not be able to resist gainsayers; they will swallow assertions for truths, and conclude every objection to be valid which they cannot refute. An unfurnished mind is liable to a state of continual indecision. Error will have the advantage in the combat, where the champion of truth enters the field without arms; for impiety still shows itself, as it did in the garden of Eden, under the semblance of knowledge.

St. Paul estimated just views and right notions of religion so highly, that he makes the improvement in knowledge in the Colossians, a matter not only of fervent desire, but of incessant prayer. He prays not only that they might be sincere, but intelligent Christians, "filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," but he does not forget to teach them that this knowledge must be made practical, they must walk worthy of the Lord, they must be fruitful in every good work. It is among the high ascriptions of glory to Christ, that in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And this ascription is pressed upon us for the manifest purpose of impelling us to seek a due participation of them from him.
St. Paul was a strenuous opposer of religious ignorance. It is not too much to say, that he places intelligence as the ground-work of Christianity. To know God, and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent, he considers as the first rudiments taught in the divine school. This knowledge can only be acquired by a cordial love, and indefatigable study of the volume of inspiration. All the conjectures of the brightest imagination, all the discoveries of the profoundest science, all the glorious objects of created beauty, all the attributes of angels, all the ideas of excellence we can conceive or combine, affords but faint shadows, inexpressive figures of the divinity. The best lights we can throw upon his perfections are from his own word, assisted by his own spirit; the clearest sight we can obtain of them is from our faith in that word, and our only strength from our acquiescence in the offers of that spirit.

And where shall we look in the whole sacred record for a more consummate statement, at once of the proper objects of knowledge, and of the duties resulting from its acquisition, than in the writings of this apostle? No one who has devoutly studied him, can shift off the neglect of duty by the plea of ignorance. It would be vindicating one sin by committing another. He everywhere exhibits such luminous characters of God and Christ, such clear views of right and wrong, such living pictures of good and evil, such striking contrasts of human corruption and Christian purity, that he who would evade the condemnation which awaits the neglect, or the violation of duty, must produce some other apology than that he did not know it. What excuse will those modern skeptics offer for their traducement of writings, which they were too shrewd either to despise or neglect? Whatever is good in their systems, they derive from a revelation which they affect to contemn. They are rich only from what they steal, not from that property which they may call their own. Reason, which could in nowise discover what Christianity has taught, is glad to adopt, while she disavows, what she could never have found out herself. She has, however, too little honesty, and too much pride, to acknowledge her obligation to the source from which she draws. She mixes up what she best likes with her own materials, and defies the world, by separating them, to detect the cheat. Revelation, in truth, has improved reason, as well as perfected morals.

But if the human reasoner despises Christianity, some Christians are too much disposed to vilify reason. This contempt they did not learn of St. Paul. He never taught,
that, to neglect an exact method of reasoning, would make men sounder divines. No such consequences can be deduced from his writings. Revealed religion, indeed, happily for the poor and illiterate, may be firmly believed, and vitally understood, without a very accurate judgment, or any high cultivation of the rational powers. But without both, without a thorough acquaintance with the arguments, without a knowledge of the evidences, it can never be successfully defended. Ignorance on these points would throw such a weight into the scale of skepticism, as would weaken, if it did not betray, the cause of truth. In our days an ignorant teacher of religion is "a workman that needeth to be ashamed." He should carefully cultivate his reason, were it only to convince himself of its imperfection. The more he proceeds under the guidance of God's spirit to improve his rational faculties, the more he will discover their insufficiency: and his humility striking its root more deeply as his knowledge shoots higher, he will become more profoundly thankful for that divine revelation, which alone can satisfy the desires of his mind, and fill the cravings of his heart.

Some well-meaning instructers have pleaded, in justification of their low attainments, St. Paul's exaltation of "the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." "It was," says a learned divine, "a mode not unusual with St. Paul, to call a thing, not by a term descriptive of its real nature, but by a name expressive of the opinion formed of it by the world, and of the effects produced by it."—In calling the Gospel foolishness, therefore, he only adopted the language of the Greeks, its Pagan enemies. It was "the natural man," to whom the things of the spirit of God were foolishness. The expression, therefore, offers no apology for nonsense, no plea for ignorance. However, the humility of Paul might lead him to deprecate "the wisdom of his own words," he has left us the means of knowing that they were of the very first excellence. He depreciates, it is true, all eloquence, whether true or false, which was adopted as a substitute "for the cross of Christ." He would indeed reprobate the idea of loading a discourse with ornaments, which might draw the attention of the audience from the Saviour to the preacher, which by its splendor might cast into shade the object he was bound to reveal; which might throw into the back ground that Cross which should ever be the prominent figure. But though, in establishing the doctrine of the Cross, God accomplished a promise of long standing, and frequent repetition that
he would "destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent," yet there is no promise that ignorance or folly shall be erected on the ruins of wisdom; the promise runs, that the wisdom from above shall supereede the pride of human wisdom.

One of the fundamental truths which the apostle labors to establish, is, that the attainment of divine knowledge, progress in holiness, conquest over sin, with all other spiritual gains, are only to be effected by the power of the Spirit of God. This doctrine, the importance of which he every where intimates, he more explicitly teaches in the eighth chapter of Romans. This conviction, which he felt deeply, he paints forcibly. Yet, though insisted on with such frequency and emphasis, many receive this as a speculative dogma, instead of a highly practical truth. Many distrust the reality of this power, or if they allow its existence, they disbelieve its agency.

This tenet, however, so slightly regarded, is in every part of the New Testament, not barely noticed by allusion, but incessantly either peremptorily asserted, or constantly assumed. Would the apostle repeatedly refer us, as the only deliverer from sin, to an ideal person! Would he mock us by a bare statement of such a power, and an unmeaning promise of such a deliverance, without directing us how it is to be obtained? The fervent habitual prayer of faith is the mean suggested. It is rational to suppose that spiritual aid must be attained by a spiritual act. God is a Spirit. Spirit and truth are the requisites expected in his worshippers. Though this doctrine is insisted on not less than twelve times in this chapter only, there is not one tenet of Christianity, in the adoption of which, the generality are more reluctant.

It is unreasonable for us to say, we disbelieve the possibility of the operation of the Holy Spirit, because we do not understand when, or in what manner it acts, while we remain in such complete ignorance how our own spirits act within ourselves. It is proof sufficient, that we see its result, that we perceive the effect of this mysterious operation, in the actual change of the human heart. Our sense of our internal weakness, must convince us, that it is not effected by any power of our own. The humble cannot but feel this truth, the ingenuous cannot but acknowledge it. Let us be assured, that Infinite Wisdom, which knows how we are constituted, and what are our wants, knows how his own spirit assists those who earnestly implore its aid.

St. Paul powerfully inculcates that new and spiritual
worship which was so condescendingly and beautifully taught by the Divine Teacher, at the well of Sychar, when he declared that the splendors of the temple worship, hitherto performed exclusively in one distinguished place, should be abolished, and the cumbersome ceremonies and fatiguing forms of the Jewish ritual set aside, to make way for a purer mode of adoration; when the contrite heart was to supersede the costly sacrifice, and God should be worshipped in a way more suited to his spiritual nature.*

Yet, even here, the wise moderation of Paul is visible. He did not manifest his dislike of one extreme point by flying to the antipodes of opposition: when ostentatious rites were pronounced to be no longer necessary, he did not adopt, like some other reformers, the contrary excess of irregularity and confusion. While the internal principle was the great concern, the outward appendage must be decorous. To keep the exterior "decent" and "orderly," was emblematical of the purity and regularity within!

While Paul's severe reproof of the confusion and irregularities, which disgraced the church of Corinth, proves him to be a decided enemy to the distempers of spiritual vanity and enthusiasm; he does not, like a worldly reprobate, seize the occasion given by their imprudence to treat with levity the power of religion itself; he does not lay hold on the error he condemns for a pretence to deride true zeal, and to render ridiculous the gifts which had been indecently abused. On the contrary, he observes how improperly these gifts and supernatural powers had been used by some on whom they were conferred; who, he laments, were more anxious to eclipse each other in these showy distinctions, than to convert them to the purposes of practical use and excellence; advises, that "spiritual gifts" may be directed to their true end; "that he may excel to the edifying of the church;" gently reminds the offenders, that they themselves were nothing more than vehicles and organs of the operation of the spirit. While he insinuates that, were these miraculous powers their sole distinction, it might be doubtful by what specific mark to recognise in them the genuine Christian; he removes the difficulty, by showing them there was a more excellent way, by which they might most indisputably make out their title. This "way," which is now as it was then, the discriminating characteristic of the true believer, is Charity; all the properties of which he describes, not for their instruction only, but for ours also

* Gospel of St. John, chap. iv.

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If the apostle has here, on the one hand, furnished no example or apology for enthusiasm and eccentricity; if the solidity of his piety, and the sobriety of his mind, are uniformly opposed to the unprofitable fervors of fanaticism, both in doctrine and conduct, yet on the other hand his life and writings are quite as little favorable to a more formidable, because a less suspected and more-common evil,—we mean indifference. Coldness and inefficiency, indeed, are, in the estimation of some persons, reputable, or at least safe qualities, and often obtain the honorable name of prudence; but to St. Paul it was not enough that nothing wrong was done; he considered it reproach sufficient that nothing was done.

He sometimes intrenches himself in the honest severity which his integrity compels him to exercise against the opposers of vital Christianity, by adducing some pointed censure against them from men of their own party or country. For instance, when he condemns, in his letter to their new bishop, Titus, the luxurious, avaricious, and slothful Cretans, he corroborates the truth of his testimony by the authority of one of their own poets, or prophets. These slow sensualists, these indulgers of appetite, these masters of ceremonies, he not only stigmatizes himself, but adds to his pagan quotation, "This witness is true." And it may be adduced as a striking instance of his discriminating mode of church government, that this wise ecclesiastical ruler, who had before exhorted Timothy, the bishop of another church, to "be gentle unto all men, meekly instructing those who oppose themselves," now directs Titus to "rebuke sharply," these temporizing teachers, and unholy livers.

He saw that a grave and sedate indolence, investing itself with the respectable attribute of moderation, eats out the very heart's core of piety. He knew that these somnolent characters communicate the repose which they enjoy; that they excite no alarm, because they feel none. Their tale of observances is regularly brought in; their list of forms, is completely made out. Forms, it is true, are valuable things, when they are "used as a dead hedge to secure the quick;" but here the observances are rested in; here the forms are the whole of the fence. The dead fence is not considered as a protection; but a substitute. The teacher and the taught, neither disturbing nor disturbed, but soothing and soothed, reciprocate civilities, exchange commendations. If little good is done, it is well; if no offence is given, it is better; if no superfluity of zeal
be imputed, it is best of all. The apostle felt what the prophet expressed,—"My people love to have it so."

Perhaps the sum and substance of the duties of a Christian minister, to which there is also a reference in this chapter, was never compressed into so small a compass as in his charge to his beloved Titus;*—"In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works. In doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech."

We see here, in a few significant words, a rule of conduct and of instruction which is susceptible of the widest expansion. The most elaborate paraphrase will add little to the substantial worth of this brief monition. Every instructor must furnish his own practical commentary, by transferring into his life the pattern, and into his preaching the precept. He adds, the sure effect of a life and doctrine so correct will be to silence calumny; the adversary of religion will be ashamed of his enmity when he sees the purity of its professor defeat all attempts to discredit him.

It is a truth, verified in every age of the church, that the doctrines which Paul preached, stood in direct opposition to the natural dispositions of man; they militated against his corrupt affections; they tended to subdue what had been hitherto invincible,—the stubborn human will; to plant self-denial where self-love had before overrun the ground. To convince of sin, to point to the Saviour, to perfect holiness, yet to exclude boasting, are the apostle's invariable objects. These topics he urges by every power of argument, by every charm of persuasion; by every injunction to the preacher, by every motive to the hearer; but these injunctions, neither argument, persuasion, nor motive, can ever render engaging. Man loves to have his corruptions soothed; it is the object of the apostle to combat them: man would have his errors indulged; it is the object of the religion which Paul preached, to eradicate them.

Of the dislike excited against the loyal ambassadors of the Gospel, by those who live in opposition to its doctrines, our common experience furnishes us with no unapt emblem. When we have a piece of unwelcome news to report, we prepare the hearer by a soothing introduction; we break his fall by some softening circumstance; we invent some conciliatory preamble: he listens; he distrusts—but we arrive at the painful truth;—the secret is out, the preparation is absorbed in the reality, the evil remains in its full force; nothing but the painful fact is seen, heard, or felt.

* Titus ch. 2.
"Thy news hath made thee a most ugly man."

The apostle knew that it would afford little comfort to the humble Christian to talk of the mercy of God in the abstract, and the forgiveness of sins in vague and general terms. He persuades the believer to endeavor to obtain evidence of his own interest in this great salvation. The fountain of forgiveness may flow, but if the current reach not to us, if we have no personal interest in the offered redemption, if we do not individually seek communion with the Father of Spirits, the Saviour of the world will not be our Saviour. But that he might not give false comfort, Paul, when he wishes "peace" wishes "grace" also; this last he always places first in order, knowing that, before the peace can be solid, it must have grace for its precursor. The character of the peace which he recommends is of the highest order of blessings. The peace which nations make with each other, frequently includes no more than that they will do each other no evil; but "the peace of God," insures to us all that is good, by keeping our hearts and minds in the love and knowledge of the Father, and of his Son Jesus Christ!

In regard to St. Paul’s ecclesiastical polity, we are aware that some persons, with a view to lower the general usefulness of his Epistles, object, that in many instances, especially in the second to the Corinthians, the apostle has limited his instructions to usages which relate only to the peculiar concerns of a particular church or individual person, and that they might have been spared in a work meant for general edification.

But these are not, as some insist, mere local controversies, obsolete disputes, with which we have no concern. Societies, as well as the individuals of whom they are composed, are much the same in all periods; and though the contentions of the churches which he addressed might differ something in matter, and much in form and ceremony, from those of modern date; yet the spirit of division, of animosity, of error, of opposition, with which all churches are more or less infected, will have such a common resemblance in all ages, as may make us submit to take a hint or a caution even from topics which may seem foreign to our concerns; and it adds to the value of St. Paul’s exhortation, that they may be made in some degree applicable to other cases. His directions are minute, as well as general, so as scarcely to leave any of the incidents of life, or the exigencies of society, totally unprovided for.

There are, it is obvious, certain things which refer to
particular usages of the general church, at its first institution, which no longer exist. There are frequent references to the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and other circumstances, which though they have now ceased, are of great importance, as connected with its history, and assisting in its first formation; and the writer who had neglected to have recorded them would have been blamable, and the Epistles which had not alluded to them would have been imperfect.

While the apostle made ample provisions, such as the existing case required, or rather permitted, he did not absolutely legislate, as to external things, for any church; wisely leaving Christianity at liberty to incorporate herself with the laws of any country into which she might be introduced; and while the doctrines of the new religion were precise, distinct, and definite, its ecclesiastical character was of that generalized nature which would allow it to mix with any form of national government. This was a likely means both to promote its extension, and to prevent it from imbibing a political temper, or a spirit of interference with the secular concerns of any country.

The wonder is, that the work is so little local, that it savors so little of Antioch or Jerusalem, of Philippi or Corinth; but that almost all is of such general application: relative circumstances did indeed operate, but they always operated subordinately. The Epistle to the Ephesians is not marked with one local peculiarity. There is not a single deduction to be made from the universal applicability of this elegant and powerful epitome of the Gospel.

St. Paul belongs not particularly to the period in which he lived, but is equally the property of each successive race of beings. Time does not diminish their interest in him. He is as fresh to every century as to his own; and the truths he preaches will be as intimately connected with that age which shall precede the dissolution of the world, as that in which he wrote. The sympathies of the real believer will always be equally awakened by doctrines which will equally apply to their consciences, by principles which will always have a reference to their practice, by promises which will always carry consolation to their hearts. By the Christians of all countries Paul will be considered as a cosmopolite, and by those of all ages as a contemporary. Even when he addresses individuals, his point of view is mankind. He looked to the world as his scene, and to collective man as the actor.
Though St. Paul frequently alludes to the variety of his sufferings, yet he never dwells upon them. He does not take advantage of the liberty so allowable in friendly letters—that of endeavoring to excite compassion by those minute details of distress, of which, but for their relation in the Acts of the Apostles, we should have been mainly ignorant.

How would any other writer than the apostle have interwoven a full statement of his trials with his instructions, and how would he have indulged an egotism, not only so natural and so pardonable, but which has been so acceptable in those good men who have given us histories of their own life and times. That intermixture, however, which excites so lively an interest, and is so proper in Clarendon and Baxter, would have been misplaced here. It would have served to gratify curiosity, but might not seem to comport with the grave plan of instruction adopted by the apostle; whilst it comes with admirable grace from St. Luke, his companion in travel.

St. Paul's manner of writing will be found in every way worthy of the greatness of his subject. His powerful and diversified character of mind, seems to have combined the separate excellences of all the other sacred authors—the loftiness of Isaiah, the devotion of David, the pathos of Jeremiah, the vehemence of Ezekiel, the didactic gravity of Moses, the elevated morality and practical good sense, though somewhat highly colored, of St. James; the sublime conceptions and deep views of St. John, the noble energies and burning zeal of St. Peter. To all these, he added his own strong argumentative powers, depth of thought and intensity of feeling. In every single department he was eminently gifted; so that what Livy said of Cato, might with far greater truth have been asserted of Paul,—that you would think him born for the single thing in which he was engaged.

We have observed in an early chapter, that in the evangelists, the naked majesty of truth refused to owe any thing to the artifices of composition. In Paul's Epistle a due, though less strict degree of simplicity is observed; differing in style from the other as the comment from the text, a letter from a history; taking the same ground as to doc-
trine, devotion, and duty, yet branching out into a wider range, breaking the subject into more parts, and giving results instead of facts.

Though more at liberty, Paul makes a sober use of his privilege; though never ambitious of ornament, his style is as much varied as his subject, and always adapted to it. He is by turns vehement and tender, and sometimes both at once; impassioned and didactic; now pursuing his point with a logical exactness, now disdaining the rules of which he was a master; often making his noble neglect more impressive than the most correct arrangement, his irregularity more touching than the most lucid order. He is often abrupt, and sometimes obscure: his reasoning, though generally clear, is, as the best critics allow, sometimes involved, perhaps owing to the suddenness of his transitions, the rapidity of his ideas, the sensibility of his soul.

But complicated as his meaning may occasionally appear, all his complications are capable of being analyzed into principles; so that from his most intricate trains of reasoning, the most unlearned reader may select an unconnected maxim of wisdom, a position of piety, an aphorism of virtue, easy from its brevity, intelligible from its clearness, and valuable from its weight.

An apparent, though not unpleasing, disconnection in his sentences is sometimes found to arise from the absence of the conjunctive parts of speech. He is so affluent in ideas, the images which crowd in upon him are so thick-set; that he could not stop their course while he might tie them together. This absence of the connecting links, which in a meaner writer might have induced a want of perspicuity, adds energy and force to the expression of so spirited and clear-sighted a writer as our apostle. In the sixth chapter of the second of Corinthians, there are six consecutive verses without one conjunction. Such a particle would have enfeebled the spirit, without clearing the sense. The variety which these verses, all making up but one period, exhibit, the mass of thought, the diversity of object, the impetuosity of march, make it impossible to read them without catching something of the fervor with which they are written. They seem to set the pulse in motion with a corresponding quickness; and without amplification seem to expand the mind of the reader into all the immensity of space and time.

Nothing is diffused into weakness. If his conciseness may be thought, in a very few instances, to take something from his clearness, it is more than made up in force. Con-
A condensed view of his thoughts, and the inexhaustible instructions that may be deduced from them, prove at what expansion they are susceptible. His compression has an energy, his imagery a spirit, his diction an impetuosity, which art would in vain labor to mend. His straight-forward sense makes his way to the heart more surely than theirs, who go out of their road for ornament. He never interrupts the race to pick up the golden bait.

Our apostle, when he has not leisure for reflection himself, almost by imperceptible methods invites his reader to reflect. When he appears only to skim a subject, he will suggest ample food for long-dwelling meditation. Every sentence is pregnant with thought, is abundant in instruction. Witness the many thousands of sermons which have sprung from these comparatively few, but most prolific seeds. Thus, if he does not visibly pursue the march of eloquence by the critic’s path, he never fails to attain its noblest ends. He is full without diffuseness, copious without redundance. His eloquence is not a smooth and flowing oil, which lubricates the surface, but a sharp instrument which makes a deep incision. It penetrates to the dissection of the inmost soul, “to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

The numerous and long digressions often found, and sometimes complained of, in this great writer, never make him lose sight of the point from which he sets out, and the mark to which he is tending. From his most discursive flights he never fails to bring home some added strength to the truth with which he begins; and when he is longest on the wing, or loftiest in his ascent, he comes back to his subject enriched with additional matter, and animated with redoubled vigor. This is particularly exemplified in the third chapter of the Ephesians, of which the whole is one entire parenthesis, eminently abounding in effusions of humility, holiness, and love, and in the rich display of the Redeemer’s grace.

In the prosecution of any discourse, though there may appear little method, he has frequently, besides the topic immediately in hand, some point to bring forward, not directly, but in an incidental, yet most impressive manner. At the moment when he seems to wander from the direct line of his pursuit, the object which he still has had in his own view, unexpectedly starts up before that of his hearer. In the recapitulation of the events of his life before Festus and Agrippa, when nothing of doctrine appears
to be on his mind; he suddenly breaks out, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" He then resumes his narrative as rapidly as he had flown off from it; but returns to his doctrine at the close, with the additional circumstance, that "Christ was the first that should rise from the dead;"—as if, having before put the question in the abstract, he had been since paving the way for the establishment of the fact.

St. Paul is happy in a mode of brief allusion, and in the art of awakening recollection by hints. It is observable often, how little time he wastes in narrative, and how much matter he presses into a few words; "Ye, brethren, have suffered the like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews; who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men,—forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved; to fill up their sins always—for the wrath is come upon them to the utmost." What a quantity of history does this sketch present! What a picture of their character, their crimes, and their punishment!

Nor does this brevity often trench on his explicitness. In the fifth chapter of the first Thessalonians, from the fourteenth to the twentieth verse, there are no fewer than seventeen fundamental, moral, and religious monitions, comprising almost all the duties of a Christian life, in the space of a few lines. The selection of his words is as apt, as his enumeration of duties is just. He beseeches his converts "to know them that are over them, and very highly to esteem them in love for their works' sake;" while to the performance of every personal, social, and religious duty, he exhorts them.

The correctness of his judgment appears still more visibly in the aptness and propriety of all his allusions, metaphors, and figures. In his Epistle to the Hebrews, he illustrates and enforces the new doctrine by reasonings drawn from a reference to the rites, ceremonies, and economy of the now obsolete dispensation; sending them back to the records of their early Scriptures. Again, he does not talk of the Isthmian games to the Romans, nor to the Greeks of adoption. The latter term he judiciously uses to the Romans, to whom it was familiar, and explains, by the use of it, the doctrines of the grace of God in their redemption, their adoption as his children, and their "inheritance with the saints in light;" on the other hand, the illustration borrowed from the rigorous abstinence which
was practised by the competitors in the Grecian games; to
fit them for athletic exercises, would convey to the most
illiterate inhabitant of Achaia, a lively idea of the subjugation
of appetite required in the Christian combatant. The
close of this last mentioned analogy by the apostle, opens
a large field for instruction, by a brief but beautiful com-
parison, between the value and duration of the fading gar-
land worn by the victorious Greek, with the incorruptible
crown of the Christian conqueror.

But whether it be a metaphor or illustration, or allusion,
he seldom fails to draw from it some practical inference for
his own humiliation. In the present case he winds up the
subject with a salutary fear, in which all who are engaged
in the religious instruction of others are deeply interested.
So far is he from self-confidence or self-satisfaction, be-
cause he lives in the constant habit of improving others,
that he adduces the very practice of this duty as a ground
of caution to himself. He appropriates to himself a gen-
eral possibility, "lest that by any means when I have
preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

Another metaphor, to which for its peculiarity we cannot
help making a distinct reference, occurs in the twelfth
chapter of the first of Corinthians. The figure with which
he there instructs the church of Corinth in the nature,
use, and variety of spiritual gifts, whilst it bears a strong
resemblance to the celebrated apologue with which Mene-
nius Agrippa appeased the tumult of the Roman populace
in the infancy of the consular government, is still much
superior to it. St. Paul reproves their dissensions in a
long chain of argument, where he illustrates the wisdom
of the Holy Spirit in his distribution of gifts, by a similitude
taken from the component parts of the human body; which,
though distinct and various, make up by union one harmo-
nious whole. He explains their incorporation into Christ,
by the interest which the body has in the several members,
each of which by its specific office contributes to the gene-
ral good. He proves the excellence of the dispensation to
consist in that very variety which had produced the con-
tention; and shows that, had the same powers been given
to all, the union would have been broken as each portion
would have been useless in a state of detachment from the
rest, which now contributed to the general organization of
the human frame.

As an orator, Paul unquestionably stands in the foremost
rank. When the renowned Athenian so "wielded the
fierce democracy," as to animate with one common senti-
ment the whole assembly against Philip; when his great rival stirred up the Roman senate against their oppressors, and by the power of his eloquence made Catiline contemptible, and Anthony detestable; they had every thing in their favor. Their character was established: each held a distinguished office in the state. They stood on the vantage-ground of the highest rank and reputation. When they spoke, admiration stood waiting to applaud. Their characters commanded attention. Their subject ensured approbation. Each, too, had the advantage of addressing his own friends, his own countrymen—men of the same religious and political habits with themselves. Before they started, they had already pre-occupied half the road to success and glory.

Now turn to Paul! — A stranger, poor, persecuted, unprotected, unsupported—despised before-hand, whether he were considered as a Jew or a Christian; solitary, defenceless, degraded even to chains—yet did he make the prejudiced king vacillate in his opinion, the unjust judge tremble on his seat. The apostle of the Gentiles owed none of his success to an appeal to the corrupt passions of his audience. Demosthenes and Cicero, it must be confessed, by their arguments and their eloquence, but not a little also by their railing and invective, kindled strong emotions in the minds of their respective audiences. Now these vituperations, it must be remembered, were applied to other persons, not to the hearers,—and men find a wonderful facility in admiring satire not directed at themselves. But in the case of St. Paul, the very persons addressed were at once the accused and the judges. The auditors were to apply the searching truths to their own hearts; to look inward on the mortifying spectacle of their own errors and vices: so that the apostle had the feelings of the hearers completely against him, whilst the Pagan orator had those of his audience already on his side.

To crown all, St. Paul has nobly exemplified the rule of Quintilian. He owed the best part of his oratory to his being a "good man," as well as a good speaker. "Otherwise," says that great critic, "though the orator may amuse the imagination, he will never reach the heart."

Conviction was the soul of his eloquence. He has no hesitation in his religious discussions. Whenever he summoned the attributes of his mind to council, decision always presided. His doctrines had a fixed system. There was nothing conjectural in his scheme. His mind was never erratic for want of a centre. "Jesus Christ, the same ves-
terday, to-day, and for ever,—with whom is no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning,‖ is the sun of his system, and round this centre every doctrine issuing from his lips, every grace beaming in his soul, moved harmoniously. Whilst he did not, like the exploded philosophy, invert order, by making the orb of day dependent on the lesser fires, which owe to him whatever light and heat they possess; he did not shrink, like the restorer of astronomical truth, from the most decisive and effectual avowal of his opinions. It is curious to observe that both these persons shared a similar fate. The astronomer was rewarded for his discoveries, with being thrown into prison by a pontiff of Rome; for the diffusion of moral light, the apostle was thrown into prison by an emperor of Rome. But mark, in the sequel, the superior influence of revealed truth over the conduct, to that of the clearest and best founded deductions of human reason. The philosopher was irresolute! the apostle persevered. Copernicus recanted what he knew to be truth, and was set free; Paul disdained liberty upon such terms and was put to death.

This resolute avowal, this predominant conviction of the sublimest of truths, enabled St. Paul to throw into his eloquence a heart and a life unknown to other orators: "as a dying man, he spoke to dying men;" and pleaded to the feelings of immortal beings for the life of their souls. Others have selected noble objects, objects well worthy their genius and their zeal,—the love of their country, liberty, and life. Paul embraced the same topics, but how ennobled in their nature! He taught his hearers "to desire a better country, that is, an heavenly." He showed them "the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free." He pointed them to "life everlasting."

In the various counsels or reproofs founded upon these divine doctrines, can we be surprised at the frequent interruption of an ejaculation or an apostrophe which he seems wholly unable to repress? Often do we participate those feelings which, as it were, break in upon his most subdued moments, and impel him to magnify that name, which is above every name, with ascription of glory, and honor and praise, and sainted adoration: with a kindred joy and elevation of soul, we seem to make even the most highly wrought devotional and practical effusions of so great a writer our own: and so far from coldly condemning what we almost believe our own, we realize something of the observation of the finest critic of antiquity, "that when the mind is raised by the true sublime, it rejoices and glo-
ries as if itself had produced what it had so much delight in contemplating." "No real Christian can read the doctrinal part of the Epistle to the Ephesians, without being impressed and roused by it, as by the sound of a trumpet." *

David, between whose temper and genius, and those of St. Paul, there seems to have been a great resemblance, frequently manifests the same inextinguishable energy of soul. His heart, like that of the apostle, is hot within him; the fire burns while he is musing. Many of the Psalms under such an influence become only one varied strain of laudatory prayer. In the nineteenth, for instance, he breaks out in admiration of the divine law, almost to appearance on a sudden, and in such an inexhaustible diversity of expression, as if he could never unburden the fulness of his overflowing heart. He describes it in no less than six different forms of perfection: and with every form, still resembling his great fellow-saint of after-ages, he connects a practical deduction. Thus by infinite variety he proves that his mental opulence is above tautology, and at the same time shows that spiritual riches should be devoted to moral purposes. "The law of the Lord so extolled, converts the soul,—gives wisdom to the simple,—rejoices the heart,—gives light to the eyes,—is not only true, but righteous altogether."

If Paul indulges the glowing expression of his own gratitude, it is to communicate the sacred flame to those he addresses; if he triumphs in "the enlargement of his own heart," it is because he hopes by the infection of a holy sympathy to enlarge theirs. In catching, however, the sacred flame, let us never forget that, in his warmest addresses, in his most ardent expressions of grateful love to his God and his Saviour, he never loses sight of that soberness and gravity which becomes both his subject and his character. It is the King eternal, immortal, invisible—the blessed and only Potentate—King of kings, Lord of lords,—He who hath immortality—who dwelleth in the light that no man can approach unto,—He, who hath honor and power everlasting, to whom, and of whom, he feels himself to speak.

May we venture to express a wish, that some persons of more piety and discernment, among whom there are those who value themselves on being more particularly the disciples of St. Paul, would always imitate his chastised language. When the apostle pours out the fulness of his heart to his Redeemer, every expression is as full of veneration as of love. His freedom is a filial freedom, while

* Macknight's Preface.
their devout effusions are sometimes mixed with adjectives, which betrays a familiarity bordering on irreverence.*

"If I am a father, where is mine honor: if I am a master, where is my fear?" They may indeed say with truth that they are invited to come boldly to the throne of grace. But does not the very word throne imply majesty on the one part, and prostration on the other? Is not "God manifest in the flesh" sometimes treated with a freedom, I had almost said a fondness, in which the divine part of his nature seems to be swallowed up in the human? Coarseness of whatever kind, may, it is true, be palliated by piety, but is never countenanced by it: it has no affinity to piety; it is only as the iron and the clay at the foot of the magnificent image, and is just so far removed from the true refinement and golden sanctity of taste, which will be learned by a due study of the first of models. If the persons so offending should plead warmth of affection, their plea will be admitted as valid, if in this feeling they can prove their superiority to their great master. In our own admirable church service, this scriptural soberness of style is most judiciously adopted, and uniformly maintained. Portions of it are indeed addressed to the Second Person in the blessed Trinity; but we look in vain for any familiar expression, any distinguishing appellative.

Much less do St. Paul's writings present an example to another and more elegant class, the learned speculatists of the German school, as recently presented to us by their eloquent and accomplished eulogist. Some of these have fallen into the opposite extreme of religious refinement; too airy to be tangible, too mystic to be intelligible. The apostle's religion is not like theirs, a shadowy sentiment, but a vital principle; not a matter of taste, but of conviction, of faith, of feeling. It is not a fair idea, but a holy affection. The deity at which they catch, is a gay and gorgeous cloud; Paul's is the fountain of light. His religion is definite and substantial, and more profound than splendid. It is not a panegyric on Christianity, but a homage to it.

He is too devout to be ingenious, too earnest to be fanciful, too humble to be inventive. His sober mind could discern no analogy between the sublime truths of Christianity and "the fine arts." Nor would he have compared the awful mysteries of the religion of Jesus with those of "free masonry," any more than he would have run a labored parallel with the mysteries of Eleusis, or the

* This remark applies more particularly to certain Hymns written in a very devout strain, but with a devotion rather amatory than reverential.
Bona Dea. Nor does he love to illustrate the word of
God by any thing but his works. His truth has no shades;
in him, whatever is right is absolute. Nor does he ever
make error perform the work of truth, by ascribing to
"enthusiasm" any of the good effects of religion. In the
celestial armory of Christianity no such spiritual weapons
as enthusiasm or error are to be found.

Had the apostle placed the doctrines of revelation as con-
genial associates with the talent of poets and artists, he
would have thought not only that it was a degradation of
the principle of our faith, but an impeachment of the divine
dispensations. God would have all men to be saved; Christ
would have the Gospel preached to every creature. Now
if we compare the very small minority of ethereal spirits,
who are fed by genius, who subsist on the luxuries of im-
agination, who are nurtured by music, who revel in poetry
and sculpture, with the innumerable multitudes who have
scarceiy heard whether there be any such thing,—such a
limited, such a whimsical, such an unintelligible, such an
unattainable Christianity, would rob the mass of mankind
of all present comfort, of all future hope. Paul would have
thought it a mockery, when the Holy Spirit could alone help
their infirmities, to have sent them to the Muses. To refer
them to the statuary when they were craving for the bread
of life, would be literally "giving them stones for bread." Nor
would he have derided the wants of those who were
"thirsting for living water," by sending him to the fountain
of Aganippe.

To be more serious:—To have placed the vast majority
of the human race out of the reach of privileges which
Christianity professes to have made commensurate with the
very ends of the earth, and to have adapted to every ra-
tional inhabitant on its surface, would have been as base
and treacherous, unjust and narrow, as the totality of the
actual design is vast and glorious.

Even had those few eminent men who ruled the empire
of intellect in Greece and Rome, attained, by the influence
of their philosophical doctrines, to perfection in practice,
(which was far from being the case,) that would neither
have advanced the general faith, nor improved the popular
morals. In like manner, had Christianity limited its prin-
ciples, and their consequent benefits, to evangelists and
apostles, or to men of genius, how insignificant would have
been her value in comparison of the effects of that bound-
less benevolence which commands the gospel to be preached
to all, without any distinction of rank or ability. Through
this blessed provision the poorest Christian, rich in faith, can equally with Boyle or Bacon relish the beauty of holiness in the pages of St. Paul, though he may not be rich enough in taste to discover its "picturesque beauties," as exhibited in the pages of some modern philosophic theologians.

Ours is a religion, not of ingenuity, but of obedience. As we must not omit any thing which God has commanded, so we must not invent devices which he does not command. The talent of a certain Lacedemonian was not accepted as an excuse, when he added to his warlike instrument a string more than the state allowed. Instead of being commended for his invention, he was cashiered for his disobedience: so far from being rewarded for improving his music, he was punished for infringing the law.

Much were it to be wished, that these deep thinkers and brilliant writers, to whom we allude with every consideration for their talents, would make their immense mental riches subservient to their spiritual profit: and as Solon made his commercial voyages the occasion of amassing his vast intellectual treasures, so that they would consecrate their literary wealth, and devote their excursions into the regions of fancy to the acquisition of the one pearl of great price.

Too often persons of fine genius, to whom Christianity begins to present itself, do not so much seek to penetrate its depths, where alone they are to be explored, in the unerring word of God, as in their own pullulating imaginations. Their taste and their pursuits have familiarized them with the vast, and the grand, and the interesting: and they think to sanctify these in a way of their own. The feeling of the Infinite in nature, and the beautiful in art; the flights of poetry, of love, of glory, alternately elevate their imagination, and they denominate the splendid combination, Christianity. But "the new cloth" will never assort with "the old garment."

These elegant spirits seem to live in a certain lofty region in their own minds, where they know the multitude cannot soar after them; they derive their grandeur from this elevation, which separates them with the creature of their imagination, from all ordinary attributes, and all associations of daily occurrence. In this middle region, too high for earth, and too low for heaven; too refined for sense, and too gross for spirit; they keep a magazine of airy speculations, and shining reveries, and puzzling metaphysics; the chief design of which is to drive to a distance, the profane vulgar; but the real effect, to separate themselves and their system from all intercourse with the wise and good.
God could never intend we should disparage his own gift, his highest natural gift, intellectual excellence. But knowing that those who possessed it, would be sufficiently forward, not only to value the talent, but to overvalue themselves for possessing it, he knew also that its possessors would require rather repression than excitement. Accordingly, we do not recollect any eulogy on mere intellectual ability either in the Old or the New Testament. In the Old, indeed, there is the severe censure of a prophet on its vain exercise; "thy wisdom and thy knowledge have perverted thee;" and in the New, the only mention of "high imaginations," is accompanied with an injunction, "to cast them down," and this in order to the great and practical end of "bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

St. Paul was deeply sensible of the necessity of circumscribing the passions, the powers, and the genius of men within due limits. He knew that they were not to be trusted to their own operation, without positive institutions, fixed laws, prescribed bounds. To subdue the pride and independence of the human heart, he knew to be no less requisite than to tame the sensual appetites. He was aware, that to fill the imagination with mere pictures of heroic virtue would not suffice for a creature like man, under the influence of that disorderly and inflammable faculty, without the infusion of holy habits, and the prescription of specific duties and defined rules. In fine, the discipline of Paul learns not so much to give play to his fancy, as to submit his will; and the first question which seems presented in his pages is not this, "How bright are thy conceptions?" but "How readest thou?"

The subject is too important, as a matter of caution, not to be placed in every possible light. Let us remember then that admiration is not conviction. There is something in perfection of every kind, which lays hold on a heart glowing with strong feelings, and a mind imbued with true taste. On this ground, even Rousseau could be the occasional eulogist of Christianity. He could institute a comparison between the son of Sophroniscus and the son of Mary, with a pen, which seems plucked by a fallen spirit from a seraph's wing. His fine imagination was fired with the sublime of Christianity, as it would have been with a dialogue of Plato, a picture of Raffaelle, or any exhibition of ideal beauty.

Longinus, a still more accomplished critic in intellectual beauty than Rousseau, amongst the various illustra-
tions of his doctrine in his beautiful work, quotes the almighty fiat at the creation, "Let there be light, and there was light," as a perfect instance of the sublime. He calls it "a just idea, and a noble expression of the power of God." Yet, though struck with this passage of the Jewish legislator, whom he coolly calls, "no ordinary person," he was satisfied with the beauty of the sentiment, without examining into that truth which is the spring and fountain of all beauty. Though he lived so late as the third century, yet he does not appear to have inquired into the truth of the Christian revelation; and thus but too lamentably demonstrated, that the taste may give its most favorable verdict to a system which had yet made no impression on the heart.

St. Paul found in the wants of man something that could not be supplied; in his sorrows, something that could not be consolated; in his lapse, something that could not be restored by elegant speculation or poetic rapture. He found that the wounds inflicted by sin could not be healed by the grace of composition; and that nothing but the grace of the Gospel could afford a remedy adequate to the demand. Let us, then, give our willing admiration to every species of true genius. Let us retain our taste for what is really excellent even in heathen models. But when called upon to identify the impressions of taste with the infusions of piety, let us boldly reply with the prophet, "What has Ephraim to do any more with idols?"

CHAP. XI.

St. Paul's Tenderness of Heart.

Among the peculiarities of Christianity, it is one of the most striking, that they who, in Scripture language, love not the world, nor the things of the world, are yet the persons in it who are the farthest from misanthropes. They love the beings of whom the world is composed, better than he who courts and flatters it. They seek not its favor nor its honors, but they give a more substantial proof of affection,—they seek its improvement, its peace, its happiness, its salvation.

If ever man, on this ground, had a pre-eminent claim to
the title of philanthropist, that man is the apostle Paul. The warmth of his affections, as exhibited in a more general view, in the narrative of St. Luke, and the tenderness of his feelings, as they appear more detailed throughout his own epistles, constitute a most interesting part of his very diversified character.

This truth is obvious, not only on great and extraordinary occasions, but in the common circumstances of his life, and from the usual tenor of his letters.

There are persons, not a few, who, though truly pious, defeat much of the good they intend to do, not always by a natural severity of temper, but by a repulsiveness of manner, by not cultivating habits of courtesy, by a neglect of the smaller lenient acts of kindness. They will indeed confer the obligation, but they confer it in such a manner as grieves and humbles him who receives it. In fulfilling the letter of charity, they violate its spirit. We would not willingly suspect, that if they are more averse from bestowing commendation, than from receiving it, a little envy, unexpected by themselves, mixes with this reluctance. But be this as it may, tender spirits and feeling hearts, especially in the first stages of their religious course, require the fostering air of kindness and encouragement. They are not able to go alone, they need the soothing voice and the helping hand. They are ready to suspect that they are going wrong, if not occasionally encouraged to believe that they are going right.

History presents us with numberless instances, in which the success or the failure of great enterprises has depended, not altogether on the ability, but partly on the temper of him who conducted it. The importance of conciliatory and engaging manners is nowhere more strikingly illustrated than by the opposite conduct and different success of two famous Athenian generals. Plutarch observes, that though Pericles and Nicias both pursued the same end, the former, in the progress of his purpose, always won the people by his kind and insinuating address; while the latter, not employing the mild powers of persuasion, exasperated instead of winning them over, and thus commonly failed in his enterprise.

Paul's consummately knowledge of human nature, as less than his tenderness of heart, led him to encourage in his young converts early opening promise of goodness. He carefully cultivates every favorable symptom. He is "gentle among them as a nurse cherisheth her children." He does not expect every thing at once; he does not expect that
a beginner in the ways of religion should start into instantaneous perfection. He does not think all is lost if an error is committed; he does not abandon hope, if some less happy converts are slow in their progress. He protects their budding graces, he fences his young plants till they have had time to take root; as they become strong he exposes them to the blast. If he rejoices that the hardy are more flourishing, he is glad that the less vigorous are nevertheless alive.

Characters which are great are not always amiable; the converse is equally true; in St. Paul there is an union of both qualities. He condescends to the inferior distresses, and consults the natural feelings of his friends, as much as if no weightier cares pressed on his mind. There is scarcely a more lovely part of his character, though it may be less striking to the common eyes, as being more tender than great, than the gentleness exhibited to his Corinthian converts; where he is anxious before he appears among them again that any breach might be healed, and every painful feeling done away, which his sharp reproof of an offending individual might have excited. He would not have the joyfulness of their meeting overshadowed by any remaining cloud.

Though he expresses himself in the most feeling manner, lest he might have given them pain by his severe reproofs in a preceding letter, yet instantly the predominating integrity of his mind leads him to take comfort in the reflection, that this temporary sorrow had produced the most salutary effects on them who felt it. His rejoicing that the very sorrow he had excited was a religious sorrow,—his reflections on the beneficial results of this affliction,—on the repentance it had produced, the distinction between this and worldly sorrow,—his generous energy in enumerating the several instances in which this good effect had appeared; "yea, what carefulness is wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear," and the animating conclusion, that "in all things they had proved themselves to be clear in the matter," all afford a proof of his being on the watch to lay hold of any possible occasion, on which to build instruction, as well as to graft consolation.

No one ever possessed more nearly in perfection, the virtuous art of softening the severity of the censure he is obliged to inflict, no one ever more combined flexibility of manner with inflexibility of principle. He takes off the edge of reproof by conveying it negatively. To give a
single instance out of many, when he thought some of his converts had acted improperly, instead of saying I blame you, he adopts a mitigating phrase, "I praise you not." This address would prepare them to receive with more temper the censure to which it is an introduction.

Of this Christian condescension each successive example furnishes us with a most engaging and beautiful model for our own conduct. With what deep regret does he allude to the necessity under which he had been of animadverting severely on the atrocious instance of misconduct above-mentioned! With what truth and justice does he make it appear that reproofs, which are so painful to the censor, are a more certain evidence of friendship, than commendations, which it would have given to him as much joy to have bestowed, as to them to have received! An important admonition to all, to those especially whose more immediate concern it is to watch over the conduct of others, that though this most trying duty should never be neglected by them, yet that the integrity which obliges them to point out faults, should be exercised in a manner so feeling as to let the offender see, that they have no pleasure in adopting harsh measures; of this truth they give the surest proof by the joy with which, like the apostle, they welcome the returning penitent back to virtue.

Observe the delicacy of his distinctions,—he wrote to them out of much affliction and anguish of heart; not that he wished to grieve him by a display of his own sorrow, but that he might judge by it of the abundant love he had for them. Nor does he, as is the vulgar practice, blame a whole community for the faults of individuals: I am grieved but in part, that I may not overcharge you all. Mark his justice in separating the offending party from the mass. Is not this a hint against an indiscriminate mode of attack? Do we not occasionally hear one audience addressed as if it were composed entirely of saints, and another, as if all were grossly impenitent sinners?

Having received sufficient proofs of the obedience of the community, in inflicting the punishment, and of the penitence of the offender in submitting to it, he was now not only anxious for his restoration, but for his comfort. He sets a most amiable example of the manner in which the contrite spirit should be cheered, and the broken heart bound up. No one was ever more studious than St. Paul, to awaken contrition; none more eager to heal its pangs.

Want of consideration is an error into which even good men sometimes fall. They do not always enter intimately
into the character and circumstances of the persons they address. St. Paul writes to his friends like one that felt, because he partook the same fallen humanity with them: like one who was familiar with the infirmities of our common nature, who could allow for doubt and distrust, for misapprehension and error; who expected inconsistency, and was not deterred by perverseness; who bore with failure where it was not wilful, and who could reprove obduracy, without being disappointed at meeting with it. In St. Paul, the heart of flesh was indeed substituted for the heart of stone.

Our spiritual strength is invigorated by the retrospection of our former errors. St. Paul's tenderness for his converts was doubtless increased by the remembrance of his own errors; a remembrance which left a compassionate feeling on his impressible heart. It never, however, led him to be guilty of that mischievous compassion of preferring the ease of his friends to their safety. He never soothed where it was his duty to reprove. He knew that integrity was the true tenderness; that a harsh truth, which might tend to save the soul, had more humanity than a palliative, which might endanger it.

From this intimate knowledge of the infirmities even of good men, he had such a conviction of the possibility of relaxing in religious strictness, that he scrupled not to express his fears to his Corinthian friends, that when he came among them, "he should not find them such as he would;" in order to soften, he divides the blame, by fearing that "he should be found of them such as they would not." Knowing, too, that the temper was more under control, and irritation less easily excited, by epistolary than by verbal communication; when he expresses his fears that at their meeting he might find among them "debates, envyings, wrath, swellings," he tenderly apologizes for expressing his apprehensions, because lest in conversation he might use sharpness. In his most severe animadversions, he does not speak of any with hopeless harshness. He seldom treats the bad as irreclaimable, but generally contrives to leave them some remains of credit. He seems to feel that by stripping erring men of every vestige of character, he should strip them also of every glimmering of hope, of every incitement to reformation. It is indeed almost cutting off any chance of a return to virtue, when we do not leave the offender some remnant of reputation to which he may still be led to act up. May not this preservation from despair lead to the operation of a higher principle? Though Timothy is
exhorted to have no company with him who obeys not the word of Paul's epistle, the prohibition is only in order "that he may be ashamed;" "yet is he not to be accounted as an enemy, but exhorted as a brother."

As there seems to have been no church which had fallen into such important errors as that of Corinth, and consequently none where more pointed reproof was necessary, so in no epistle is there more preparatory soothing, more conciliatory preliminaries to the counsels or the censures he is about to communicate. He tells them that "in every thing they are enriched,"—"that they come behind in no gift," before he reprehends them for their contentious spirit, for their divisions, for their strifes. Thus, though the reproof would be keenly felt, it would not be met with a spirit previously exasperated—a spirit which those reprovers infallibly excite, who by indiscriminate upbraiding stir up the irascible passions at the outset, shut up every avenue to the kind affections, and thus deprive the offender of that patient calmness with which he might otherwise have profited by the reproof.

This intimate feeling of his own imperfection is every where visible. It makes him more than once press on his friends, the Christian duty of bearing one another's burdens, intimating how necessary this common principle of mutual kindness was, as they themselves had so much to call forth the forbearance of others. In his usual strain of referring to first motives, he does not forget to remind them, that it was fulfilling the law of Christ.

As the ardent zeal of St. Paul led him into no enthusiasm, so the warmth of his affections never blinded his judgment. Religion did not dry up, as it is sometimes accused of doing, the spring of his natural feeling; his sensibility was exquisite; but the heart which felt all, was quickened by an activity which did all, and regulated by a faith which conquered all.

His sorrows and his joys, both of which were intense, never seem to have arisen from any thing which related merely to himself. His own happiness or distress were little influenced by personal considerations; the varying condition, the alternate improvement or declension of his converts alone, could sensibly raise or depress his feelings. With what anguish of spirit does he mourn over some, "of whom I have told you often, and now tell you weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." Mark again his self-renouncing joy—"We are glad when we are weak and ye are strong." Again, "let me rejoice in the day of
Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain.'

When he expressed such a feeling sense of distress, upon
the interesting occasion of taking his departure for Jerusa-
lem, "the Holy Ghost witnessing in every city that bonds
and imprisonment awaited him,"* still he felt no concern
for his own safety. No: he anticipated without terror his
probable reception there. With a noble disregard of all
personal considerations, he exclaims, "but none of these
things move me, neither count I my life dear, so that I may
finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have
received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the
grace of God."†

If none of these things moved him, then whence arose
the sorrow he so keenly felt? It arose from no selfish
cause; it was from a consideration far superior to that ten-
der feeling, that they should meet no more, though that
too he would deeply regret; it was occasioned by reflection
on the future condition of the church, and a prophetic view
of that corruption of doctrine to which he foresaw his be-
loved converts would be soon exposed.

There is something singularly beautiful in the dignity,
simplicity, and godly sincerity of this apostolic charge, to
which we allude. With humble confidence, he refers his
audience to their own knowledge of his whole conduct.
He assures them, that neither any fears of the insidious
Jews, always on the watch to circumvent him, nor the hos-
tility of the idolatrous Gentiles, always ready to oppose
him, had ever driven him to withhold any important truth,
any salutary admonition. He slightly touches on the two
fundamental truths on which all his instructions had been
built, faith and repentance: then he reminds them, that not
satisfied with the public exercise of his function, he had
practised that subsidiary and valuable method of instruction
—private visits at the houses of individuals—a method
equally practicable in all ages of the church; equally de-
sirable to all who wish to gain a real acquaintance, in the
intervals of public, service with the necessities, the infirm-
ities, and the sins of their respective hearers. This would
enable him to perform his stated ministrations with ten-fold
effect. It would initiate him into the endless variety of
characters of which every audience is composed; it would
enable the teacher to be more personal in his exhortations,

* Acts xx.
† We make no apology for the repeated references to this portion of this
most interesting chapter.
more pointed in his reproofs, more specific in his instruction, than he could be when he addressed them in the great assembly. It would also qualify him for more extensive usefulness in those public addresses by the materials which he was thus collecting. It would be among the means also to win their affection and increase their attachment, when they saw that his zeal for their spiritual advancement was large and cordial; that he did not content himself with the stipulated scantling of bare weight duty; that he did not deal out his instruction with a legal scrupulosity, but was willing to spend, and desirous to be spent, for them.

With what a holy satisfaction did the conscience of the apostle further testify that no desire of pleasing, no fear of offending, had prevented him from delivering wholesome truths, because they might be unpalatable! What an awful intimation to every ambassador of Christ, that this indefatigable apostle, at the moment of final separation, could call on all present to testify that whatever might have been the negligence of the hearer, the preacher "was pure from the blood of all men;" that he had never been guilty of that false tenderness, of not declaring to them the whole counsel of God! He appeals to his disinterestedness, that, so far from being influenced by any lucrative motive, he had labored with his own hands, not only to support himself, but to assist the poor. How touching, no doubt to his hearers, was the intimation, that the same hands which had been raised for them in prayer, had been employed for their support!

This modest allusion to his own liberality, and to the personal labor which had enabled him to exercise it, was a proper parting lesson. It reminded his auditors, that no part of his religion was merely theoretical. He had, doubtless, frequently insisted on the principle; he here shows them its practical effect; in this, as in other instances, pressing home every truth he taught by every virtue he exercised.

He concludes with a powerful application to his associates in the ministry, to whom he was about to commit the care of the people. The tender grief, the grateful sympathy, the prayers, the tears and embraces of the afflicted audience, "sorrowing most because they should see his face no more," bore a truer testimony to the fidelity of the preacher, than the most elaborate eulogy on his style or manner; and doubtless afforded a higher test of excellence, than any temporary effect, produced by an artificial harangue, which, while it fills the hearer with admiration of
the preacher, leaves his own conscience untouched, his own heart unhumble.

He then bequeathes, as a kind of dying legacy, the people to their ministers; affectionately exhorting the latter, first; to "take heed to themselves," as the only sure earnest of their taking heed to their flock, strengthening his exhortation "to feed the church of God," by a motive at once the most powerful and the most endearing, because he hath purchased it with his own blood.

In that great and terrible day of the Lord when the glorious Head of the Church shall summon the assembled universe to judgment, among the myriads who shall tremblingly await their own definitive sentence, how will the exploring eye of men and angels be turned on the more prominent and public characters, who, from rank, profession, talent, or influence, were invested with superior responsibility! What individual among these distinguished classes will be able to endure the additional load of other men's sins, brought forward to swell his personal account?

Though it is not easy to image to the mind a more touching event than this parting scene of Christian friends on the shores of Ephesus, yet there is one to come of far higher interest, that of their re-union;—that august scene, when the pastor and his flock shall appear together, at the call of the Chief Shepherd,—when the servants of the Universal Master,—"they who have sought that which was lost, and brought again that which was driven away, and bound up that which was broken, and strengthened that which was sick,"* shall deliver up to Him who laid down his life for the sheep, that flock "which he will require at their hands."

Yes! among the candidates for a blessed immortality, will stand awfully pre-eminent the band of Christian ministers, each surrounded by "the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made him overseer," every one of whom had sacramentally declared, at his introduction into the fold, that he undertook the sacred office in obedience to that solemn call.† What a sound, "Well done good and faithful servant!" to him who shall have acquitted himself of his tremendous responsibility! What a spectacle?—multitudes entering into the joy of their Lord, gratefully ascribing their opening and inconceivable felicity to the zeal, the fidelity, the prayers of their pastor. For them, to resume the beautiful metaphors of the Holy Book,—for them, the green pastures, into which they had conducted their flock, shall flourish in everlasting verdure; for them, the waters of comfort,

* Ezek. xxxiv. 16.   † See the Ordination Service
beside which they had led them, shall flow from a source which eternity cannot exhaust, from those rivers of pleasure which are at God's right hand for evermore.

If this spectacle has a contrast, we avert our eyes from the contemplation. If even the picture is too terrible to be sketched, who could stand the possibility of its being realized?

This whole valedictory address to the elders of Ephesus combines every beauty of composition: it exhibits an energy, a devotion, a resignation, an integrity, a tenderness, which cannot be sufficiently admired. And the more intimately to touch their hearts by mixing the remembrance of the friend with the injunctions he had delivered, he not only refers them to the doctrines which he had taught, but the tears which he had shed.

There is nothing like stoical indifference. Nothing like a contempt of the sensibilities of nature, in his whole conduct; and it furnishes a proof how happily magnanimity and tenderness blend together, that as there is probably no character in history which exhibits a more undaunted heroism than that of St. Paul, so there is perhaps not one whose tears are so frequently recorded. "What mean ye to weep and break my heart?" is an interrogatory as intelligible to us in the character of Paul, as the heroic declaration, "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus." What ground, then, is there for that charge so frequently brought against persons of eminent piety, that they are destitute of natural feeling. The Old Testament saints were striking examples of domestic tenderness.

When Paul exhorts his converts "to stand fast in the Lord," he declares his own participation in the blessings of this steadfastness, in terms the most endearing—"dearly beloved and longed for, my crown and joy, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved;"—as if he would add to the motives of their perseverance, the transport it would afford to himself. His very existence seems to depend on their steadfastness in piety—"for now we live if ye stand fast in the Lord." Again, as a proof how dear his converts were to him, he was desirous of imparting to them not only the Gospel of God, but also his own soul.

The spirit of Christianity is nowhere more apparent than in the affectionate strain in which he adjures his Roman friends only to consent to save their own souls. One would suppose it was not the immortal happiness of others, but his own, which so earnestly engaged him. How fervently
tender is his mode of obtesting them! "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God"—"I Paul by myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." As the representative of his Master, he implores of man the reconciliation for which it would be natural to expect that man himself, whose own concern it is, should be the solicitor.

St. Paul's zeal for the spiritual welfare of whole communities, did not swallow up his ardent attachment to individuals; nor did his regard to their higher interests lead him to overlook their personal sufferings. He descends to give particular advice to one friend respecting the management of his health. In his grief for the sickness of another, and his joy at his recovery, he does not pretend to a feeling purely disinterested, but gratefully acknowledges that his joy was partly for his own sake, "lest he should have sorrow upon sorrow." These soft touches of sympathy for individuals particularly dear to him, in a man so like-minded with Christ, in the instances of Lazarus and John, are a sufficient refutation of the whimsical assertion of a lively genius; that particular friendships are hostile to the spirit of Christianity.

The capacious heart of this blessed apostle was so large as to receive into it all who loved his Lord. The salutations with which most of his epistles close, and the affectionate remembrances which they convey, include perhaps the names of a greater number of friends, than any dozen of Greek or Roman heroes, in the plentitude of success and power, ever attracted; if we may judge in the one case by the same rule as in the other, the narrative of history, or the writings of biographical memoirs.

But his benevolence was not confined to the narrow bounds of friends or country.—He was a man, and nothing

* Romans, xii. 1. † Timothy. ‡ Epaphroditus.

§ It is however a debt of justice due to a departed friend to observe, that no suspicion could be more unfounded than that Mr. Soame Jenyns was not sincere in his profession of Christianity. The author lived much in his very pleasant society, and is persuaded that he died a sincere Christian. He had a peculiar turn of humor; he delighted in novelty and paradox, and perhaps brought too much of both into his religion. Ingenious men will sometimes be ingenious in the wrong place. If he lays too much stress on some things, and underrates others; if he mistakes or overlooks even fundamental points, so that some of his opinions must appear defective to the experienced Christian; yet the general turn of his work on the Internal Evidence of Christianity may render it useful to others, by inviting them by the very novelty of his manner to consult a species of evidence to which they have not been accustomed. A skeptical friend of the writer of these pages, who had stood out against the arguments of some of the ablest divines, was led by this little work to examine more deeply into internal evidence; it sent him to read his Bible in a new spirit. He followed up his inquiries, consulted authors whose views were more matured, and died a sound believer.
that involved the best interests of man was indifferent to him. A most beautiful comparison has been drawn by as fine a genius as has adorned this or any age, between the learned and not illaudable curiosity which has led so many ingenious travellers to visit distant and dangerous climes, in order "to contemplate mutilated statues and defaced coins; to collate manuscripts, and take the height of pyramids," with the zeal which carried the late martyr of humanity on a more noble pilgrimage, "to search out infected hospitals, to explore the depth of dungeons, and to take the gauge of human misery" in order to relieve it.

Without the unworthy desire to rob this eminent philanthropist of his well-earned palm, may we not be allowed to wish, that the exquisite eulogist of Howard had also instituted a comparison which would have opened so vast a field to his eloquent pen, between the adventurous expeditions of the conqueror, the circumnavigator, the discoverer, the naturalist, with those of Paul, the martyr of the Gospel? Paul, who, renouncing ease and security, sacrificing fame and glory, encountering "weariness and painfulness, watching, hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness; was beaten with rods, frequent in prisons, in deaths oft, was once stoned, thrice suffered shipwreck, was a day and night in the deep," * went from shore to shore, and from city to city, knowing that bonds and imprisonment awaited him; and for what purpose? He, too, was a discoverer, and in one sense a naturalist. He explored not indeed the treasures of the mineral, nor the varieties of the vegetable world. His business was with man; his object the discovery of man's moral wants; his study, to apply a proportionate remedy; his work, to break up the barren ground of the human soil; his aim, to promote the culture of the undisciplined heart; his end, the salvation of those for whom Christ died. He did not bring away one poor native to graft the vices of a polished country on the savage ignorance of his own; but he carried to the natives themselves the news, and the means of eternal life.

He was also a conqueror, but he visited new regions, not to depopulate, but to enlighten them. He sought triumphs, but they were over sin and ignorance. He achieved conquests; but it was over the prince of darkness. He gained trophies, but they were not military banners, but rescued souls. He erected monuments, but they were to the glory of God. He did not carve his own

* 2 Corinthians, ch. xi.
name on the rocky shore, but he engraved that of his Lord on the hearts of the people. While conflicting with want, and struggling with misery, he planted churches; while sinking under reproach and obloquy, he erected the standard of the cross among barbarians, and (far more hopeless enterprise!) among philosophers; and having escaped with life from the most uncivilized nations, was reserved for martyrdom in the imperial queen of cities!

CHAP. XII.

St. Paul's Heavenly Mindedness.

True religion consists in the subjugation of the body to the soul, and of the soul to God. The apostle everywhere shows, that by our apostasy this order is destroyed, or rather inverted. At the same time he teaches, that though brought into this degraded state by our own perverseness, we are not hopelessly abandoned to it. He not only shows the possibility, but the mode of our restoration, and describes the happy condition of the restored, even in this world, by declaring, that to be spiritually-minded is life and peace.

He knew that our faculties are neither good nor evil in themselves, but powerful instruments for the promotion of both; active capacities for either, just as the bent of our character is determined by the predominance of religion or of sin, of the sensual or the spiritual mind. St. Paul eminently exhibited, both in his example and in his writings, the spiritual mind. He was not only equal in correctness of sentiment and purity of practice with those who are drily orthodox, and superior to those who are coldly practical; but "he perfects holiness in the fear of God." He abounds in the heavenly mindedness which is the uniting link between doctrinal and practical piety, which, by the unction it infuses into both, proves that both are the result of divine grace; and which consists in an entire consecration of the affections, a voluntary surrender of the whole man to God.

This disposition the apostle makes the preliminary to all performance, as well as the condition of all acceptance. This it is which constitutes the charm of his writings. There is a spirit of sanctity which pervades them, and which, whilst it affords the best evidence of the love of
God shed abroad in his own heart, infuses it also into the heart of his readers. While he is musing, the fire burns, and communicates its pure flame to every breast susceptible of genuine Christian feeling. Under its influence his arguments become persuasions, his exhortations entreaties. A sentiment so tender, and earnestness so imploring, breathes throughout them, that it might seem that all regard for himself, all care for his own interests, is swallowed up in his ardent and affectionate concern for the spiritual interests of others.

The exuberance of his love and gratitude, the fruits of his abundant faith, break out almost in spite of himself. His zeal reproves our timidity, his energy our indifference. "He dwells," as an eloquent writer has remarked, "with almost untimely descant," on the name of Him who had called him out of darkness into his marvellous light. That name which we are so reluctant to pronounce, not through reverence to its possessor, but fear of each other, ever sounds with holy boldness from the lips of Paul. His bursts of sacred joy, his triumphant appeals to the truth of the promises, his unbounded confidence in the hope set before him, carry an air not only of patience, but of victory, not only of faith, but of fruition.

Whoever desires more particularly to compare this spirit of divine power manifested by the apostle, with the opposite spirit of the world, let him carefully peruse the eighth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. After describing the strong and painful conflict with the malignant power of sin in the seventh chapter, with what a holy exultation does he, in the opening of the eighth, hurry in, as it were, the assurance that "there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." It somewhat resembles that instant, I had almost said, that impatient, mercy of God in the third of Genesis, which seems eager to make the promise follow close upon the fall, the forgiveness upon the sin; to cut off the distressing space between terror and joy, to leave no interval for despair. God, who is so patient when he is to punish, is not so patient when he is to save. He delays to strike, but he hastes to pardon. "After the first offence," says bishop Jeremy Taylor, "God could not stay from redeeming;" nor could Paul stay from proclaiming that we are redeemed. The apostle, like his Creator, loses not a moment to comfort the soul which he has been afflicting.

In this divine effusion we at once discern the difference between natural weakness and superadded strength; be-
tween the infirmities which are fortified by the assistance of the spirit, and the sensual mind, which not only is not, but cannot be subject to the law of God; between him who not having "the spirit of Christ, is none of his," and him in whom "Christ, the spirit of life, dwells;" between him, who, if he yield to the pleasures of sense, shall die, and him who, through the spirit mortifying the deeds of the body shall live.

It is worth observing, that he does not make the line of demarcation between the two classes of characters, to consist merely in the actual crimes and grosser vices of the one class, and the better actions of the other. It is to the sensual and spiritual mind, the fountain of good and evil deeds, to which he refers as the decisive test. This radical distinction he further conceives to be a more obvious line of separation than even any difference of religious opinions, any distinction arising from the mere adoption of peculiar dogmas.

That the reviving assurance may appear to belong exclusively to real Christians, he marks the change of character by the definite tense now, implying their recent victory over their old corruptions, which he had been deploring. This precaution would prevent those who remained in their former state from taking to themselves the comfort of a promise in which they have no part. He guards it still more explicitly, by declaring, that the true evidence of this renovation of heart, was their walking after the spirit; a term which describes habitual progress in the new way, to which we are conducted by the new nature, and which, if it do not always preserve us from deviating from it, recalls us back to it.

The power Paul felt; and on this principle he wrote; and he never wrote on any principle on which he did not act. After he had carried piety to the most heroic elevation; after he had pressed the most fervent exertions or others, and gained the most splendid conquests over himself, still he considered himself only in the road to salvation; still he never thought of slackening his course; he thought not of resting; he had not reached his end. He was not intimidated from pursuing it by new difficulties; his resolution rose with his trials; all he feared for himself, all against which he cautioned others, was declension; his grand solicitude for them and for himself was, that they might not lose the ground they had gained. He well knew, that even the present position could not be long maintained without the pursuit of farther conquests. He walked after the spirit.
The terrible forms of distress which he summons to view in this, as well as in other parts of his epistles, always remind him of the principle which makes them supportable. He enumerates human miseries in all their variety of shapes, —tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword. But to what end does he muster this confederate band of woes? He calls on them not to avert the sufferings they inflict; no, he challenges them to separate the Christian sufferer from the love of Christ. He presents himself to us as an instance of the supreme triumph of this love over all earthly calamity. The man whose distresses abounded, who was pressed above measure, comes out of the conflict, not only a conqueror,—that to one of his ardent spirit seemed too poor a triumph, he is more than a conqueror. But how is this victory achieved? Through him who loved us. That lowliness which made him say just before, "that which I do I allow not, but what I hate that I do," must have been lifted by a mighty faith when he exclaimed, "I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor life, nor death, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

In speaking, in this chapter, of the glories of the eternal world, his rapture does not escape him as the sally of the imagination, as a thought awakened by a sudden glance of the object; he does not express himself at random from the impulse of the moment; his is not the conjectural language of ignorant desire, of uncertain hope; it is an assumption of the sober tone of calculation. "I reckon," says he, like a man skilled in this spiritual arithmetic,—"I reckon," after a due estimate of their comparative value, "that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed."

No man was ever so well qualified to make this estimate. Of the sufferings of the present world he had shared more largely than any man. Of the glory that shall be revealed, he had a glimpse granted to no other man. He had been caught up into paradise. He "had heard the words of God, and seen the visions of the Almighty," and the result of his privileged experience, was, that he "desired to depart, and to be with Christ;" that he desired to escape from this valley of tears; that he was impatient to recover the celestial vision, eager to perpetuate the momentary foretaste of the glories of immortality.

We perceive, then, how this hope of future felicity sus-
tained him under conflicts, of which we, in an established state of Christianity, and suffering only under the common trials of mortality, can have no adequate conception. His courageous faith was kept alive and fortified by fervently practising the duty he so unwearyedly urges upon others; continuing instant in prayer.

To encourage this practice in his readers, and at the same time to point out the source of his own heavenly hope, and continual intercourse with the Divine presence, he adds, "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us." Nor does his high trust and confidence in God, thus gendered, easily find its limit. On the contrary, he adds, "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

This trust was an assurance of the largest import, and it involved indefinite consequences. Having cordially confided in him for salvation through the blood of Christ, he found, as is always the case, the greater involving the less: he found that he had little difficulty in trusting Him with his inferior concerns. To Him to whom he had committed his eternal happiness, to Him he could not scruple to confide his fortune, his health, his reputation, his life.

We have not, it is true, these manifestations, of which the apostle was favored with a temporary enjoyment. But we have his testimony, added to the testimony, the evidences, the proofs, the promises, the demonstrations of the whole New Testament. Why, then, are we not supported, encouraged, animated by them? It is because we do not examine these evidences, because we do not consult these testimonies, because we neglect these proofs: therefore it is, that we are not nurtured by these promises. We entertain them as speculations, rather than as convictions, we receive them as notions, rather than as facts.

If ever a cordial desire of these devout assurances is conferred, it is in fervent prayer. What an encouragement to this holy exercise, is the hope of being raised by it, to the heart-felt belief that such felicity is real, and that it is reserved for the final portion of the humble Christian? Too humble, perhaps, to give full credit that such great things can be in store for him. For a moment he is staggered, till faith, the parent of that humility which trembles while it believes, enables him to apply to himself the promises of Him to whom nothing is impossible, the merits of Him for whom nothing is too great, the death of Him who died that we might live for ever.
In whatever part of his writings the apostle speaks of the efficacy of the death of Christ, and of the "constraining" power of his love, there is a vehemence in his desire, a vivacity in his sentiments, an energy in his language, an intensity in his feelings, which strongly indicate a mind penetrated with the depth of his own views. He paints the love of his Lord as a grace, of which, though his soul was deeply sensible as to its nature, yet as to the degree, it is "exceeding abundantly above" not only "all that he could ask," but "all that he could think." His boldest conceptions sink under the impression which no language could convey.

Yet these sublime portions of his writings, which bear the more special stamp and impress of the Gospel, which afford the nearest view of realities as yet unapproachable, are set aside by many, as things in which they have no personal concern. They have, indeed, a sort of blind reverence for them, as for something which they conceive to be at once sacred and unintelligible, such a kind of respect as a man would naturally entertain at the sight of a copy of the Scriptures in a language which he did not understand.

Eloquent as he was, we often find him laboring under his intense conception of ideas too vast for utterance. In describing the extent of the love of God, its height and depth, its length and breadth, his soul seems to expand with the dimensions he is unfolding. His expressions seem to acquire all that force with which he intimates that the soul itself, so acted upon, is invested. To be strengthened with might, would have been reckoned tautology in an ordinary writer on an ordinary subject; and to be strengthened with all might, would seem an attribute impossible to mortality. But holy Paul had himself felt the excellency of that power; he knew that it is derived, and that the fountain of duration is the glorious power of God.

In delineating the mighty operations of Divine love on the human mind, the seeming hyperboles are soberly true. Where the theme is illimitable, language will burst its bounds. He preaches riches which are unsearchable—exhorts to know the love which surpasses knowledge—promises peace which passes understanding—we must look at things which are not seen—against hope we must believe in hope—while sorrowful we must always be rejoicing—as having nothing must reckon that we possess all things—dying, and behold we live—though unknown we are well known—in short, he reconciles contradictions, unites opposites. Antipathies by nature become affinities by grace. The love of God in
Christ is the point where he makes contraries centre, and impossibilities meet.

His spirit seems most intimately to identify itself with the church of Ephesus. What an improbable union! The late idolatrous worshippers of Diana, and the late persecutors of the saints of Jesus, have now but one heart and one soul! These recent enemies to Christ, and to each other, now meet in one common point of attraction. With what holy triumph does he dilate on their common faith! that love of God in Christ Jesus which is their common centre and bond of union!

Still, as we have such frequent occasion to observe, he does not sacrifice practical duty to the indulgence of his rapture. Still he does not allow even these Ephesians to rest satisfied with the grace they have received. It is not enough that they have been favored with a vocation, they must "walk worthy of it." "The perfecting of the saints" must be carried on; "they must reach the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." No such perfection had been attained as would allow them to rest in their present position. Even in this highly favored church, progress is enjoined, pressed, reiterated.—No elevation of devout feeling sets him above attention to moral goodness.

Nothing can be more beautiful than the abrupt apostrophies of praise and gratitude into which, in the midst of sorrow, of exhortation, of reproof, he unexpectedly breaks out. The love of his Redeemer so fills his soul, that it requires an effort to restrain its outward expression. Even when engaged in the transaction of business, and directing the concerns of others, which, by an ordinary mind, would have been pleaded as a valid reason for suspending spiritual ideas, and dismissing spiritual feelings, they yet mix themselves, as it were involuntarily, with his secular cares; there is not only a satisfaction but a joyfulness in these escapes of affection which seem to spring from his soul, in proportion to the depression of his circumstances, to the danger which surrounded, to the deaths which threatened him.

When Paul and Silas were imprisoned at Philippi, it is recorded that they prayed at midnight. This would naturally be expected from such men, under such circumstances; but it is added, "they sang praises unto God." Thus they not only justified, but glorified Him, under this suffering, as well as degradation. For it must not be forgotten, that this imprisonment was not merely a measure for securing their persons,—they were stripped bare,—many stripes were laid upon them, and the iron entered into their soul. Yet they sang praises unto God!
What a triumph is here of the element of spirit over the force and violence of outward circumstances!

'Th' oppressor holds
His body bound, but knows not what a range
His spirit takes, unconscious of a chain;
And that to bind him is a vain attempt,
Whom God delights in, and in whom he dwells.'

In the epistle to the Ephesians, to which we have just referred, we are presented with a fresh instance how much his devotion rose under the same circumstances of distress. It was written from a prison, and is almost one entire effusion of love and praise. It is an overflowing expression of affectionate gratitude, that has no parallel. It seems to be enriched with an additional infusion of the spirit of God, and has perhaps more of the heroism of Christian feeling than, except in the discourses of our Lord, is to be found in the whole sacred treasury. It seems to come fresh from the celestial world. He speaks not as from a prison, but as from a region of light, and life, and glory. His thoughts are in heaven, his soul is with his Saviour, his heart is with his treasure: no wonder, then, that his language has a tincture of the idiom of immortality.

As Archimedes, when Syracuse was taken by the besiegers, was so intent on a mathematical demonstration, that he knew not when the city was lost: so the apostle, absorbed in a concern as much superior to that of the philosopher as Scripture truth is to scientific, lost sight of the cruelties of Nero, forgot his former sufferings, felt not his present captivity, thought not of his impending fate—present, past, and future, as they related to himself, were absorbed in his zeal for the salvation of the church, for the glory of its founder! Mark the divine supports vouchsafed to this imprisoned saint! Note his state of grace! Observe the perfection of his faith! How the motion of his spirit was accelerated as it drew nearer to its centre! He whose deep humility had suggested to him the possibility, that, after converting others, he might himself be rejected: he who had desired not to be unclothed, but to be clothed upon—now declares that he is ready to be offered up, now desires to depart; not in the gentle decay of exhausted nature, not in the weaning languour of a sick bed, not in the calm of a peaceful dissolution, suffering only the pains inseparable from an ordinary death; but he is prepared to meet the hand of violence: he is ready to pour out his blood upon the scaffold; he is longing to join "the souls which were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God." So far from
being dismayed, because he knew that his martyrdom was at hand; he who knew not what it was to boast, yet knowing in whom he had trusted; feeling his eternal redemption drawing nigh, could exclaim with a holy bravery; "I have finished my course; I kept the faith."

Then in a rapture of triumphant joy at the mental view of the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, "had prepared for him against the great day," that same unparalleled philanthropy, which he had so constantly manifested, breaks out and consecrates a moment, when we might have supposed the immediate nearness of his own unspeakable blessedness would have engrossed his whole soul. His religion was no selfish piety, his hope no solitary salvation. Gratitude swells into its highest transport from the reflection that the Lord Jesus had not exclusively reserved the crown for him, no, nor for the beloved Timothy, to whom he writes, nor for the multitude of his own friends, nor for the converts who were to be peculiarly "his joy and crown of rejoicing;" but "for all them also which love his appearing," for all "the redeemed of the Lord to the end of the world.

CHAP. XIII.

A general view of the qualities of St. Paul: his knowledge of human nature—his delicacy in giving advice or reproof—his integrity.

There is in St. Paul's writings and conduct, such a warmth and openness; so much frankness and candor; such an unreserved pouring out of his very soul; such a free disclosure of his feelings, as well as of his opinions; such an elevation, mingled with such a soberness of thinking; so much social kindness, with so much divine love; so much practical activity, with such deep spirituality; so much human prudence, with so much of the wisdom which is from above; so much tenderness for the persons of men, with so little connivance at their faults; so much professional dignity, with so much personal humility,—as it would be difficult to find in any other human being.

Yet in all these opposite excellences, there is nothing that is not practicable, nothing that is not imitable. His religion, like his morality, has a peculiar sedateness. His
ardent feelings betray him into no intemperance of speech, into no inequality of action. His piety is free from eccentricity, his faith from presumption.

Uniformly we find a great reasonableness in his character; and it adds to his value as an example, that he was, if we may be allowed so familiar an expression, eminently a man of business. His transactions, indeed always tended to the same end with his devotions and his instructions; he was full of care, but it was the care of all the churches; each day was fully occupied, but it was that same "care," which came upon him, not only as a Sunday, but as a daily care.

The perfection in which he possessed this quality, proves that his devotedness had in it nothing of abstraction. He exhibited no contempt of the common usages, no renunciation of the common comforts of life, when the former could with propriety be observed, or the latter be lawfully enjoyed; no coveting of sufferings, when they could be conscientiously avoided. He was no pattern for ascetics, no prototype for Stylites. He bequeathed no example of bodily macerations, nor uncommanded austerities, nor penances unprofitably aiming at atonement. His idea of self-denial was to sacrifice his own will; his notion of pleasing God was to do and suffer the Divine will.

His discretion was scarcely less conspicuous than his zeal: unlike some enthusiastic Christians in the early ages of the Church, who, not contented to meet persecution, invited it; he never sought, whilst he never shrank from danger. Though his life was one continued martyrdom, to which the brief suffering of the stake or the axe would have been a mercy, yet he was contented to live for lengthened services: though he would have finished his course with joy to himself, he was willing to protract it for the glory of God; though he counted not his life dear, yet he knew it to be useful, and therefore desired its continuance.

He was entirely exempt from that indiscreet zeal which seems to glory in provoking the displeasure of the world. He had nothing of that bad judgment, which seeks distinction from singularity. His straightforward rectitude neither courted the applause, nor despised the good opinion of men. He who, in the integrity of his heart could say, "We sought glory neither of you nor yet of others," in the tenderness of that heart could say, to the same persons, "for what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing; are not even ye,—ye are our glory and joy."

He was totally free from any irrational confidence in
supernatural interpositions. Though living under the influence of the Holy Spirit, he felt no enthusiastic inflation.

Though, in his perilous* voyage, assured by an angel of God that there should be no loss of lives, yet he helped with his own hands to throw out the tackle, and the ship must be worked by his direction. He went farther, declaring, "except the men abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." Could the boldest impugner of Divine Providence have exercised more prudence, have exhibited more activity?

Not only from this passage, but from the general spirit of his writings, we may learn, that merely to say, we trust in God for the accomplishment of any thing within our power, without using ourselves the rational means of accomplishing it, is a total want of sense; and not entirely to trust in Him, while we are using them, is an utter want of faith.

Though favored with immediate revelations from above, yet was Paul so singularly modest, as only slightly to advert to divine communications, and then in the name of a third person,—I knew a man in Christ.—So continent of speech, as not even to disclose this distinction till near fourteen years after it had been conferred. May we not then agree with the sagacious Paley, that "St. Paul's mind had none of the characteristics of enthusiasm; that the coolness of his head always kept pace with the warmth of his heart?"

His conduct uniformly exhibits the precise distinction between Christian wisdom and worldly policy. His boundary line is clearly defined, and he never steps over it to serve a purpose. Of that prudence which is akin to selfishness, of that discretion which leans to craft, of that candor which tends to undue pliancy, of that wisdom which is sensual and earthly, he had not the slightest tincture. What an illustrious orator of our own time said of his contemporary statesman, may be far more appropriately applied to St. Paul,—that, in gaining admiration, his virtues were his arts.†

His intellectual powers were admirably constituted to second his high moral and spiritual attainments. He had an intuitive sagacity of mind. This deep master of the science of man was intimately acquainted with all the doublings and turnings, the intricacies and perverseness of the heart In short he knew the exact point from which to take the most comprehensive view of this scene of man; and his writings possess this great advantage, that they also put the intelligent reader in the position to take the same view.

* Acts, ch. xxvii. † Mr. Burke of the Marquis of Rockingham.
He knew every plait and fold of the human character. He had studied the species in all its modifications and varieties, from the monarch on the throne to the meanest officer in his court; from the high priest presiding in the Sanhedrim, to the Pharisee praying in the street: of the intolerance of the one, he had had personal experience; through the duplicity of the other, his keen eye could pierce, without consulting the breadth of his phylactery.

The same acute penetration brought him no less acquainted with the errors of the well-intentioned, with the weaknesses of the wise, with the failings of the virtuous, and the inconsistencies of even the conscientious. Yet did he never convert his knowledge of all the shades of the human mind to an unkind, malevolent or selfish purpose. It never taught him to hate the unworthy, with whose obliquities it made him acquainted; or to despise the weak whose infirmities it had discovered. So far was he from availing himself of his sagacity, by turning the vices or imbecilities of others to his own account, that it inspired him with a more tender and compassionate feeling for the frailties of their common nature.

In perusing his epistles, we should always bear in mind, that St. Paul is not addressing the profligate and profane, but converts, or, at least, religious professors. This consideration would prevent our putting the reproofs and corrections which he thought necessary for them at too great a distance from ourselves. Into this danger we may be too much inclined to fall, if we do not bring these people nearer to what we suppose to be our own level. They were already Christians. It was not, therefore, always necessary to arrange all the fundamental doctrines into a regular system, much less to begin with a formal exposition of the elements of a religion, with the principles of which they were already imbued; or at least with the doctrines of which they were acquainted. This manner of addressing them is a proof that their progress was already considerable.

The first epistle is inscribed "to all that are at Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints, whose faith is spoken of throughout the world." The next is "to the church of God at Corinth, with all the saints in Achaia." Another "to the saints that are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." Again, "to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ at Colosse." His letters to individual friends, designates also the piety of his correspondents. "To Timothy, his son in the faith;" "to Titus, his own son after the common faith." And in writing to the Hebrews collectively,
he denominates them "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling."

It would be well if the generality of Christians could inspire to rank with any of these classes. St. Paul's knowledge of mankind, however, of which we have said so much, would prevent his addressing the best of his converts, as characters who did not require either caution, correction, or improvement. He knew even after they had adopted the Christian profession, how pertinaciously bad habits would cleave to some, how much besetting sins, natural infirmity, temptation without, and passion within, would impede the progress of others. He was aware that many who thought themselves sincere, and perhaps really were so, were yet careless and cold hearted; that many who were warm in profession, were selfish, indolent, covetous; that many who appeared to be lovers of God, were yet inordinately lovers of pleasure; that some who profess'd to be dead to sin, were alive to the world. "Alexander did him much evil;"—"Demas forsook him;" "Phygellus and Hermogenes turned away from him."

The persons to whom he wrote might, on the whole, be considered as no unfair specimen of professing Christians in every age. Consequently neither his doctrine nor his precepts can, by any fair rule of judgment, be limited to the community, or even to the individual, to whom they were immediately inscribed; he has erected his mandate into an unalterable standard of general Christianity.

The inspiring guide of St. Paul knew that human nature, left to its own specific operation, would be the same in that church of Rome to which his Epistle was addressed, as in the now existing church of that metropolis,—a church which has so far departed from the simplicity of its founder; that the church of Ephesus would differ only in its local circumstances and form of government from the church of England; that the same sort of beings, with the same wants and weaknesses which composed the church of Galatia, would compose that of Geneva and of Holland; that it was not the Corinthian convert alone who should become "a new creature;" that it was not the member of any particular community that must "put off the old man with his deeds;" he knew that the transmuting power of true religion would confer the same character of newness upon every genuine believer; that as in every age the principle is the same, so also will be the results.

In illustration of these general remarks, let us select a particular case.—Our apostle had not studied the human
heart to so little purpose as not to perceive that it is of itself commonly indisposed to liberality. Even where a measure of religious feeling has conferred or enlarged this virtue, he knew that it requires excitement to keep the flame alive; that if easily kindled by some affecting tale, or some present object, it may, by being left to itself, be as easily extinguished. He knew that impressions, if not immediately followed up, and acted upon, soon wear out; that a warm impulse, if left to cool, evaporates in mere profession. On this principle, then, we find him delicately reminding the Corinthians* of the zeal with which they had voluntarily engaged to raise a fund for the indigent, and remonstrating on the obligation to put their own plan in execution, by distributing as well as collecting.

In suggesting this duty, he takes a circuitous path, by intimating the necessity of consistency in the conduct of Christians, by dwelling on the expediency of those who abounded in faith and eloquence, and religious knowledge, abounding also in acts of beneficence; and by hinting that a high profession, without that broad principle of Christian charity, of which he knew almsgiving to be one fruit, would be an anomaly discrepant to themselves, and injurious to religion.

He then proposes to them, with the hand of a master, persuasions, arguments, and examples; he makes duties grow out of motives, and impresses both by actual instances. He mentions, in a sort of incidental way, the benevolence of a less opulent and less instructed people, the Macedonians; and, according to his invariable custom, produces their charity as growing out of their piety. *They gave themselves first unto the Lord,* and then, as the effect would naturally follow the cause, *they gave unto us by the will of God.* He informs them, that this generous people did not wait to confer their bounty till it was solicited. He intimates, that in this instance it was not those who wanted the charity, but those who gave it, "that pressed it with much entreaty:" instructively hinting, that they had made the true use of afflictions; for that "their poverty," instead of being pleaded as an apology for withholding their charity, "abounded to the riches of their liberality."

This was a powerful intimation, that if those more indigent converts had been so bountiful, what might not be expected from the opulent metropolis of the regions of Achaia? It was also an experiment of their sincerity; for if they were more forward in profession, and more abun-

*2 Cor. ch. viii.
tant in graces, would it not be an expected consequence, that they should be more abundant in works of charity?

And, finally, not contented with pressing upon them the example of a church of inferior note, he rises suddenly to the sublimest of all precedents. He does not, to _them_, quote any injunction of their Divine Master to charity, though with such injunctions the Gospel abounds; but in a manner strong, and instant, unexpectedly presses his _example_, and in the loftiest possible instance: * "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." To what a trifle, to what a nothing, does he, by this admirable turn, reduce the largest pecuniary bounty, by directing their attention to the un-
_speakable gift!_

To the same purpose he directs his friends at Ephesus, in his last affectionate discourse, to the _precept_ of Christ. After the most powerful exhortations, he alludes to his having himself supplied his necessities by the labor of his own hands, in order to the exercise of charity; and then, lest they should suppose this to be any vaunt of his self-denial, rather than a declaration made to stimulate his hearers to similar industry, by a similar motive of charity, —he sums up the charge by a most powerful incitement, equal of itself to account for his own generosity, as well as to awaken theirs, producing the only posthumous quotation which Scripture has preserved of the Divine Instrucor: "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive."

Another instance of his delicacy is, that in addressing the same people, when he would lower to its just inferiority the value of gifts and miraculous powers, in comparison of _the more excellent way_, he does not directly point at their vanity and self-exultation, but with a refinement worthy the attention of all censors, he transfers the application to himself—Though _I_ (not though you) speak with the tongues of men and of angels; though _I_ have the gift of prophecy and faith; though _I_ bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, _I_ am nothing.†

As he thought it necessary, in this address, to adduce the strongest supposable instances, even instances which could not be thought to exist, there was no method which could so effectually expose the radical evil of uncharitableness with so little offence to those who were guilty of it, as to apply the imaginary case to his own person: nor could

* 2 Cor. ch. viii.
† 1 Cor. ch. xiii.
the most elaborate harangue on the beauty of charity have produced without it so powerful an effect; nor would any delineation of all the opposite vices, which were notoriously practised by the proud and sensual Corinthians, have affected them so much, as this beautiful portrait of the heavenly virtue in which many of them were eminently deficient, and to whom the picture therefore presented such a contrast.

Yet, while he thus combated their preference of those which might raise admiration, to those which tended to the public good, he thought proper to let them see that the inferior value he set on them was not to screen or justify any ignorance of his own; and that, as is too commonly the case, he did not depreciate learning, because he did not possess it.

After having enjoined on the Thessalonians, that it was their duty "to love one another, as they were taught of God," lest it might look like a suspicion rather than a reminding, he encouragingly subjoins,—"and indeed ye do it." In the same spirit, after saying to the same church, "Comfort yourselves together, and edify one another," he again intimates that they did not so much require to be instructed as congratulated, by adding, "even as also ye do."

Again, with a holy generosity, when he has any thing to notice, which he can honestly praise, the commendation he bestows is undivided; when any unacceptable point to press, he softens prejudices and courts compliance by mixing himself with the injunction, or involving himself in the censure: "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit." In lamenting, in the seventh of Romans, the dominion of sin, he speaks in his own person: in referring, in the subsequent chapter, to the dominion of grace, he extends the consolation to all believers. On every occasion which calls both qualities, gentleness and lowliness, into exercise, St. Paul shows himself not only to be the humblest, but the politest of men.

Had a late noble and polished preceptor * been as conversant with the Holy Scriptures as he unquestionably was with polite literature, and had his principles been as sound as his taste, he would have had no occasion to look farther than the writings of Paul of Tarsus, for the most complete illustration of that favorite maxim, the adoption of which he so repeatedly enjoined on his misguided pupil. His fine sense, under the influence of religion, would have led

* Lord Chesterfield.
him, while he pressed the injunction, to give it all it wanted,—a right direction. He would have found the *suaviter in modo* accompany the *fortiter in re*, more uniformly in our apostle than in any other writer.

In addition to the numberless instances of this union, that occur in his epistles, some of which we have already noticed, we cannot forbear mentioning, that in writing to Timothy, he recommends "the spirit of power and of a *sound mind;*" to which he subjoins, "*hold fast the form of sound words.*" But while he is so peremptory as to the force of the matter, he is not less attentive to the duty of mildness in the manner. He directs, that the dictates of this sound mind be conveyed with *affection,*—this form of sound words he communicated with *love;* and in expatiating on these gentle graces, we must not forget the situation under which he exercised them.

In the days of prosperous fortune, we frequently see the appearance of cheerfulness and complacency in characters not remarkable for gentleness of mind: but Paul, under the most disastrous circumstances, never fails to exhibit the same amiable courtesies. It is therefore not easy to account for the prejudices of certain persons, who always speak of him, as a character of the most repulsive harshness.

I should be very unwilling to suspect, if a few of these critics are to be found among my own sex, that their dislike to this apostle arises from a cause which is rather calculated to inspire gratitude than to provoke censure. His attention, in not being limited to their highest interests, but descending also to their minutest concerns, is a proof surely that he thought nothing beneath his notice, which might raise the dignity and add to the beauty of the female character. I should be very unwilling to suppose that their disapprobation arises from his having said, "*She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.*" Nor could I presume to suspect, that his injunction of submission to their husbands,—of subordination *always,* and of silence *sometimes,*—can possibly be the cause of the hostility of any Christian ladies.

Still less would I venture to suppose, that their displeasure is owing to his having recommended "*that women should adorn themselves in modest apparel,*"—nor that they should object to him for his preference of "*shame-facedness*" to "*costly array,*"—of "*sobriety*" to "*brothered hair,*"—of "*good works*" to "*gold and pearls.*"

* 1 Tim. ch. ii.
It looks as if St. Paul was of opinion, that the external appearance of women was an indication of the disposition of the mind; and this opinion it is probable made him so earnest in recommending these symbols of internal purity. He doubtless more strongly prohibits certain personal decorations, because they were the insignia of the notoriously unworthy females of his time. And it may be fairly presumed, that he never thought it could be construed into a hardship to be cautioned against wearing the badge of the profession of Lais.

If they are of opinion, that his pointedly suggesting to them the ornaments of a meek and quiet spirit, was at least a superfluous injunction, they will forgive him on the ground that he might not think it unnecessary, even to the most gentle, to "stir up their pure mind by way of remembrance." It is obvious that he could not possibly entertain any prejudices against a sex, in which he counted so many valuable friends. And let it be seriously observed, that in whatever relates to pious affections, to Christian practice, to disinterested kindness, to zeal and diligence, there was obviously, in St. Paul's estimation, neither male nor female. For do we not hear more of his affectionate regard for good women, and of his generous testimony to their worth, than we hear of the friendship with the sex of any other character in history? He delights in their praises. "Phebe" is warmly commended for her good offices "to the saints at Rome," not only as having been an important assistant to the apostle himself, but as "the succorer of many" Christians. "Priscilla" is honorably recorded as "his helper in Christ Jesus," as one who, with her husband, had, "for his life laid down their necks." For this he thankfully observes, they are entitled not only to his thanks, but also to "the thanks of all the churches of the Gentiles." He acknowledges that "Mary had bestowed much labor on him and his converts." The name of "Apphia," and that of "Julia," is perpetuated by his affectionate gratitude. That of "Chloe" stands prominent in his grateful page. "Tryphena and Tryphosa labored much in the Lord." To the honor of British ladies be it remembered, that his friend "Claudia" was our country-woman.*

Paul observes that, in the family of Timothy, piety on

* If any consideration should increase the interest we take in this blessed apostle, it would be the strong presumption, from testimonies recently adduced by a learned, pious, and laborious prelate, that St. Paul, in all probability, preached the Gospel in Britain, to which country it is conjectured, after the most diligent research, that he returned with the family of Carac-
the female side was hereditary, and he congratulates his friend on the excellent principles of his two maternal relations; and virtually ascribes to these instructresses, "that from a child he was acquainted with the Scriptures." Others he has named, whose praise is not only in the churches, but whose names are in the book of life.

Are not these testimonies to female excellence from such an eulogist, and in such a cause,

"Above all Greek, above all Roman fame?"

If it stands recorded on the monument of a noble Englishman, as his highest distinction, that he was friend to Sir Philip Sidney, it stands engraven on a monument more durable than brass, even in the indestructible records of the Book of God, that so many women were the honored friends of the chiefest apostle of Jesus Christ.

If St. Paul has been further accused by some persons of being an enemy to the state of marriage, it must be by those who forget to take into the account what a calamitous time, that in which he wrote for Christians,—who forget also his own express declaration, that the suggested suspension of such an union was "good for the present distress." His compassionate mind foresaw the aggravated calamities to which the entrance into this tender connection would, at this particular juncture, involve the persecuted Christians. Is it not absurd to suppose that this zealous apostle of Christ would suggest, as a permanent practice, a measure which must in a few years, if persisted in, inevitably occasion the entire extinction of Christianity itself?

Since, then, it would be derogatory to any, especially of my own sex, to suspect that their objection to St. Paul can arise from any of these causes, may we not more rationally conjecture, that it proceeds from a prejudice lightly taken up on hearsay evidence—a prejudice propagated without serious inquiry, without having themselves closely examined his writings? Such an examination, to which they are now earnestly invited, would convince them that, to all his exalted qualities, he added, in an eminent degree, urbanity, feeling, and liberality.

But nothing more raises our veneration for St. Paul's character, than that his extreme sensibility of heart, and his rare delicacy in consulting the feelings of others, to which we have so frequently referred, is never exercised at the expense of his integrity. There are, as we have before observed, many upright minds, whose honesty is yet somewhat disfigured by a harsh temper. They are too consci-
entious to censure unjustly, but, knowing the censure to be merited, they have rather a pleasure in inflicting the correction. And though they are not glad the offender deserves it, they are not sorry it is their duty to impart it. St. Paul never severely reproved another, that he did not inflict a wound on his own feelings. Yet though he would rather have spared another than himself, he would spare neither when the imperative voice of duty demanded plain dealing. Gentleness of manner in our apostle was the fruit of his piety; the good breeding of some men is a substitute for theirs.

The conduct of St. Peter and St. Paul presents at once a striking instance of the integrity of Christian friendship, and of the imperfection of human excellence. Before the apostles met at Antioch, Peter seems to have erred in a material point, not in associating freely with the Gentiles, but in disingenuously shunning their society on the return of his Jewish friends. This fear of human censure, which was not yet entirely extinguished in this great apostle, while it strengthened the prejudices of the Jews, weakened the influence of the other apostles; misled Barnabas "though a good man, and a just;" and not a little alarmed Paul.

This vigilant minister thought the example so fraught with dangerous consequences, that he boldly remonstrated on this act of duplicity,—an act unlike the general character of Peter, which, except in one awful instance, rather inclined to indiscreet frankness. Paul himself informs us, in his epistle to the Galatians, that he "withstood him to his face," not to gratify any resentment of his own, but because his friend "was to be blamed;" not privately, to spare his confusion, but "before them all," to avert the danger. Nor does this Christian sincerity appear to have interrupted their friendship; for it did not prevent Peter, on a subsequent occasion, from alluding to Paul as his beloved brother. From this circumstance we may learn among other things, that the "fear of man," is one of the lingering evils which quits the human heart with the greatest reluctance: it shows that it may cleave to him, even in his renovated state, and that therefore the same vigilance is necessary in this, as in his previous character.

Peter, on this occasion, gave an instance of that prompt repentance which he had so repeatedly manifested after the commission of an error. He offered no justification of his fault, but observed a meek silence. We learn also, from the recorded failings of St. Peter, that this first bishop of
Rome, at least, did not arrogate to himself the claim of infallibility.

St. Paul's kindness for his brethren, never made him on any occasion lose sight of his courageous integrity. Considering the Gentile proselytes to be peculiarly the objects of his care, he resolutely defended them from the necessity of submitting to the law of Moses, thus preserving to the Gentiles their liberty, and to the Gospel its purity. By his firmness in this instance, a great obstacle to the reception of Christianity was removed.

May we here be allowed to observe, though somewhat out of place, that the characters of these two apostles are brought forward with such remarkable prominence and detail, in Sacred History, that it would be a subject well worthy some able pen, to delineate the characters of the men, and interweave that of their writings, in some connected work. Thus placed in one frame, we should have a most interesting view of these two eminent persons as the representatives of the Gentile and the Jewish Churches of Christ. This representation, incorporated with the circumstances which distinguished the first promulgation of the Gospel, renders every particular concerning them highly affecting.

But to return. It is to be observed, as a fresh proof of the honesty and the spirit of self renunciation which governed our apostle, that when he reprehends the Corinthians for their imprudence in opposing one minister to another;—in the partiality and favoritism which he condemns, he makes no exception for Paul: the preference to himself above Apollos would not gratify a mind, who, beside the danger to the flattered individual, saw the evil of opposition, of rivalry, of division, let who will be the person preferred.

He might have seen the dangerous and blinding influence of excessive prepossession and party attachment; when even his wise and virtuous contemporary, Seneca, could say of Cato, that he would rather esteem drunkenness a virtue than think Cato vicious. Nor would he probably have accepted of the same compliment which Cicero pays to the famous discourse on the Immortality of the Soul,—that though Plato had given no reason for it, yet his authority would have determined him.
CHAP. XIV.

St. Paul on the Love of Money.

Among the innumerable difficulties daily incident to the life of man, we may reckon as not among the least, the danger almost inseparable, which attends the yet inevitable necessity for money. To reconcile integrity in the pursuit with innocence in the possession, is indeed to convert a perilous trial into a valuable blessing. Riches are no evil in themselves: the danger lies, in not being able to manage the temptation they hold out to us. Even where the object is fairly pursued, and the acquisition not unfairly appropriated, a close application to the attainment of wealth is not without its snares to the most upright and liberal mind.

Even these better-disposed persons, in spite of purity of intention and integrity of conduct, are in constant danger, while in pursuit of their object, of being entangled in complicated schemes, and overwhelmed with excessive solicitude, of being so overcharged with the cares of this world, as to put that world which is out of sight, out of mind also.

Others find, or fancy, that there is a shorter cut and a surer road to riches, than that in which plodding industry holds on his slow and weary way. Industry is too dull for an enterprising spirit; integrity too scrupulous for the mind which is bent on a quick accomplishment of its object. The rewards of both are too remote, too uncertain, and too penurious, for him, "who maketh haste to be rich."

Much occurs to this point, in St. Paul’s charge to Timothy, contained in the latter part of the last chapter of his first epistle. Keeping one main end in view, the apostle has indeed adopted a sort of concealed method, which requires some attention in the reader to discover. The general drift of this powerful exhortation is, less to guard his beloved friend himself, who was perhaps in comparatively small danger from the temptation, than to induce him to warn those over whom he had the spiritual superintendence, against the love of money. In order to this, he does not immediately enter upon the main subject, but opens with another proposition, though in no very remote connection with it; a proposition the most important, and the most incontrovertible, namely, the immense gain to that soul which should combine godliness with contentment.
He knew the union to be inseparable; that as godliness cannot subsist without contentment, so neither can true contentment spring from any other than an inward principle of real piety. All contentment, which has not its foundation in religion, is merely constitutional—animal hilarity, the flow of blood and spirits in the more sanguine character; coldness and apathy in the more indifferent.

The pressing, then, this preliminary principle, was beginning at the right end. A spirit of contentment is stifling covetousness in its birth; it is strangling the serpent in the cradle. Strong and striking are the reasons which the apostle produces against discontent. To the indigent he says, "they brought nothing into the world," therefore they need the less murmur at possessing little in it. To the wealthy he holds out a still more powerful argument against the rage canine of dying rich, when he reminds them that they "can carry nothing out of it."

This reflection he intends at once to teach content to the poor, and moderation to the rich. The one should be satisfied with a bare subsistence, for the poorest cannot be poorer than when they came into the world: the other should not enlarge their desires for boundless indulgences, to the means of gratifying which, as well as to the gratification itself, the grave will so soon put a period.

The apostle, having shown his deep insight into the human mind by his brief but just view of the subject, goes on to show the miserable consequences of discontent, or, which is the same thing, of an indefinite desire of wealth. "They that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." The words are weighty and powerful, and amply verified by experience, whether we consider money in its acquisition or in its possession. Its votaries "fall into a snare."

We have need to be more intently on the watch against the intrusions of this unsuspected sin, because there is not one which intrenches itself within so many creditable pretences; none in which more perverted passages are adduced from Scripture itself in its support. "If any provide not for those of his own house, he is worse than an infidel," is frequently translated into a language foreign to its meaning, unfavorable to dispersing abroad. That charity begins at home, is not seldom pleaded as a reason why she should never turn out. There is one plea always ready as an apology for the eagerness for amassing superfluous wealth; and it is a plea which has a good look.
We must provide for our children is the pretence, but we must indulge our avarice, is the truth. The fact is, a man is provident for his family, but he is covetous for himself. The sordid mind and the grasping hand are too eager to put off their gratification to so remote a period as the future aggrandizement of those for whom they pretend to amass. The covetous man hungers for instant gratification, for the pleasure of counting his hoards, for the pride of "calling his lands by his own name."

Even many professing Christians, speak with horror of public diversions, or even of human literature, as containing the essence of all sin, yet seem to see no turpitude, to feel no danger, to dread no responsibility, in any thing that respects this private, domestic, bosom sin; this circumspect vice, this discreet and orderly corruption. Yet the sins which make no noise are often the most dangerous, and the vices of which the effect is to procure respect, instead of contempt, constitute the most deadly snare.

Wit has not been more alert in shooting its pointed shafts at avarice, than argument has been busy in its defence. No advocate, it is true, will venture to defend it under its own proper character; but avarice takes the license used by other felons, and, by the adoption of an alias, escapes the reprobation attached to its own name. Covetousness has a bad sound; it is, if we may be allowed the application, a moral cacophony, a fault which no critic in ethics can at any rate tolerate. It is a tacit confession of its hateful nature, and its possessor never avows its real name, even to himself. This quality not only disguises its turpitude by concealment, but shrouds its own character under the assumed name of half the virtues. When accused, it can always make out a good case. It calls itself frugality, moderation, temperance, contempt of show, self-denial, sobriety; thus at once cherishing the pleasure and the profit of the sin, and the escaping its infamy.

Even the most careless in conduct, the most negligent of character, he who never defends himself against the charge of what he calls the more generous vices, indignantly fights off the imputation of this. While he deems it a venial offence to deny himself no guilty pleasures, to pay no just debts, he would repel the accusation of being sordid as strongly as a man of principle. Yet at the same time his thirst of money may be as ardent, in order to make a bad use of it, as his who covets it without intending to use it at all.

Let not therefore "the snares of this world and the de-
ceitfulness of riches" make us forget that he who covets money as a means to other forbidden gratifications, is as much guilty of covetousness as he who desires it as an end. He who makes it the minister to improper indulgences, is not less criminal as an example, and is far more criminal as to the effects of his conduct, than he who covets in order that he may amass. The word of inspiration calls covetousness idolatry; but are not inordinate lovers of pleasure, for which money supplies the aliment, idolators also, inasmuch as the sacrifices they offer to their idol prevents their being "lovers of God?"

If this ensnaring love of money assumes to be connected with the sober qualities, which is commonly the case in quiet minds, it is far otherwise in those of a different order. In most minds it is the enemy of charity. The demands of this great duty are amongst the first and most easy sacrifices at the shrine of mammon, more especially where a too large scale of expense has been established, and a reduced expenditure is thought necessary: how often do we see the first deduction made, by withholding a little paltry sum which had been assigned by charity; a sum perhaps originally disproportionate to the general habits of expense; while no blow is aimed at the redundances of a devouring luxury, of an inordinate vanity; though the retrenchment in the first instance will scarcely be felt, while, in the latter, it might restore the power, not only of perpetuating, but of augmenting beneficence.

But the mischief is of still wider extent. In more animated minds the love of money is frequently allied to the bolder vices; to rapacity, to oppression, to injustice: and as these more formidable sins are usually practised for the purpose of obtaining the means of splendor, magnificence, and show: wealth, even thus obtained, not seldom procures its own protection. The gay and unthinking, whose grand object in life is to multiply the scenes of dissipation, and who enjoy these pleasant effects of their neighbor's vices by participating in the amusements they procure, are not very inquisitive as to the source from whence these prodigal pleasures flow. The unsuccessful aspirer after forbidden wealth is indeed not only avoided but stigmatized; with them his crime lies not so much in the attempt as in the failure; while prosperous corruption easily works itself into favor: having first struggled for oblivion for the cause, it soon obtains praise for the effect, and finds little difficulty in maintaining a station which it required some management to reach.
But if there are few vices which separate a man less from the friendship of the world, than avarice, there are few that separate him more widely from the duty which he owes to his neighbor, or stand more fearfully between his soul and his God; "it drowns men in destruction and perdition." When the eye is first opened on the eternal world, how will many among the rich, the powerful, the flattered, be astonished to find all the attributes which made them great extinct; all the appendages which made them arrogant, vanish; to find—nothing but themselves.

It is to be observed, that St. Paul not only calls the love of money an evil, for in this view, where the passion is acknowledged, it is commonly considered; but he proceeds further to denominate it the "root," the radical principle, not only of one evil, but of all evil. Besides that there is scarcely any sin which the determined lovers of money will not be led to commit, in order to gain money, there are also, as we have observed, innumerable evils in its misapplication when gained; these he probably included in their general condemnation. Other vices are loved for their own sake, but riches are idolized for the sake of every indulgence of which they procure the enjoyment, of every vice to which that enjoyment leads.

This it is which makes riches the general centre of human desire. They who do not accumulate money, persuade themselves that they do not love it; but many love it for far other ends than to hoard it. St. Paul knew that it was the universal snare; a trap appropriately baited with every allurement congenial to the taste of the person on whom the temptation is to be practised;—to the elegant desires of the more refined, or the coarser appetite of the more grossly voluptuous. The sensual, the aspiring, the vain, and the prodigal, all consider it as the grand, indispensable material with which to build their visionary fabrics of happiness.

Money is the most efficient tool with which ambition works; it is the engine of political mischief, and of domestic oppression; the instrument of individual tyranny, and of universal corruption. Money is the elementary principle of pleasure; it is the magnet which, to the lover of flattery, attracts parasites; which the vain man loves for the circle it describes about him, and the train which it draws after him, even more than for the actual enjoyments which it procures him. It is the grand spring and fountain of pride and self-sufficiency; more especially to those who have nothing better to value themselves upon; to those of inferior education, suddenly raised to wealth or power; to those
who are deficient in intellectual as well as spiritual end ments. In short, as the fabled king turned every thing into gold which he touched, so its craving possessor turns gold into every thing he desires. It is the substance and the essence which, under endless modifications, ensnares, betrays, and finally disappoints the heart of man.

After enumerating the various moral dangers to which the love of money lays the heart open, the apostle adverts to its highest possible corruption; he declares it to be the root of apostasy. He doubtless alluded to his own immediate knowledge of certain persons, who, while they "coveted after riches, had erred from the faith." There is something extremely touching in this effect of covetousness, which St. Paul appears himself to have witnessed among some of whom he had once seemed to hope better things;—they had pierced themselves through with many sorrows, with incurable anguish perhaps, for that abandonment of God, into which covetousness had seduced them.

It was probably these living instances of the ruin of virtuous principles by this vice, which leads him to warn even Timothy, so great a proficient in piety, of the perils attached to the love of money. And nothing affords matter of more awful reflection to the most sincere Christian, than that Paul thought it necessary to caution his "dearly beloved Timothy, his own son in the faith," Timothy, the exemplary bishop of Ephesus, against the snares of this insidious enemy. Shall a common, shall even a sincere Christian, think vigilance superfluous, when this distinguished saint was not only charged to caution others, but to guard himself against this most treacherous of all temptations?

There is something peculiarly solemn in the apostle's mode of adjuring Timothy to avoid this sin. The single apostrophe, "O man of God!" would be a panoply against the temptation. The implied impossibility that a man of God could be a coveter of money, was equal to a thousand arguments against it.

The two-fold guard with which he arms Timothy is equally applicable to all Christians. He does not say, deliberate on your danger, reason on the temptation, produce your strong arguments against it,—but flee these things. Flight is in this case the only courage; escape the only security; turning your back upon the enemy, the only sure means of conquering him.

But St. Paul does not only direct what is to be avoided, but what is to be done. The flight from sin is not a mere
negative act, it involves positive duties; in its view it involves, following after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. All these spiritual and moral graces he draws up in battle array, to assist as auxiliaries in the combat he is about to enjoin. The Christian will have to maintain a conflict with corruption and temptation, during the whole scene of action. Going on to sustain the metaphor drawn from the military warfare, he calls on Timothy as a faithful soldier of Jesus Christ; and while he exhorts him to fight the good fight of faith, he presents to his view the crown of victory. He assures him that it will not be a mere gratuitous fight, he will lay hold on eternal life.

He reminds Timothy of his special vocation "whereunto thou art called." He animates him with the quickening recollection of the glorious profession he had made; and that, not in the retirement of devotion, but "before many witnesses," intimating how much the honor of the Gospel is concerned in the proficiency, the steadfastness, the perseverance to the end, of all its professors, especially of its appointed teachers. He not only reminds him of his profession at his baptism, and consecration to the ministry, but in order to elevate his mind to the highest pitch, he adjures him in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and could raise him to immortal glory; and, as if he would fill his mind with every grand and awful image, reminds him of the "good confession made by the Divine Confessor before Pontius Pilate," exhorting him, from all these lofty motives, to "keep this commandment spotless and unreproachable until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ!" In so doing, men could not rebuke him, religion would not be wounded by him, and his Saviour would finally receive him with the plaudit he has promised, and the crown he had purchased.

The sublime doxology which follows; the ascription to God, of all power, praise, and dominion, glory and immortality; the fervor of his mind, rapt as it seems to be with the present view of the blessed and only Potentate, King of kings, Lord of lords, immortal, invisible, unapproachable, and surrounded with visions of glory,—do not make the apostle forget to revert to the main object of his charge, the danger of riches: or rather, the anticipation of future bliss had fired his soul with more intense zeal against that sin which he thought most likely to shut out his beloved converts from the enjoyment of it; "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they trust not in uncertain riches."

Having thus shown the nature of riches—"uncertain"
in every thing but their danger,—he soon despatches the concluding and most pleasant part of his office, by showing how the Christian use of riches may convert a snare into a blessing; an instrument of ruin into an evidence of faith. He proposes a scheme of moral usury, shows that there is a species of avarice which he not only allows, but enjoins, that they who are rich in this world increase the interest of their money by laying it out in good works; that they lay up in store against the day to come; against a remoter period than that for which the covetous provide. This is beating the miser at his own weapons; this is indeed giving perpetuity to riches; what they lay out for the poor they lay up for themselves, by lending unto the Lord. This is a legitimate love of money, this is a covetousness worthy of a Christian. This is indeed lodging their treasure beyond the reach of moth, rust or thieves.

He cautions them against the love of riches, from their uncertainty; an argument likely to weigh with those who are blind to higher considerations; an argument more illustrated to us by actual instances in the late frenzy of revolution, than any other period of history. He then contrasts what is uncertain with what is solid and durable. That confidence which is not to be placed in "uncertain riches," he directs to be transferred to "the living God," the foundation of all substantial opulence, the giver of all the good that is enjoyed; the giver of all "the power to get wealth," and of the heart to use it to his glory. This readiness "to distribute," this willingness "to communicate," these unequivocal fruits of faith, obedience, and love, not the purchase of heaven but the evidences of faith in him who died to purchase it for them, will not be rejected by real Christians, after his declaration, "inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

When we consider the contradiction which the lives of some authors, on religious subjects, form with their writings, may they not be said somewhat to resemble the workmen employed in building the ark? These infatuated men spent years in preparing an asylum from the deluge, without practically believing that it would ever take place. While they were mechanically employed in working for the salvation of the others, their labor made no provision for their own safety. The sweeping flood descends; but the builders are excluded from the very refuge which they have assisted in providing!

How different was the conduct of our apostle? His ex-
hortation in this, as in all other instances, derives great additional weight from the consistency of his conduct with his writings. The philosopher Seneca, composed his excellent book of Ethics, in the same city, and near the same time in which this Epistle to Timothy was written. He suffered also a violent death under the same Roman emperor with St. Paul. In the writings of the philosopher are many beautiful passages directed against the vice we have been considering, and no one ever inveighed more pointedly against the luxurious indulgences to which riches are applied. Yet Seneca, first the disciple of the abstinent school of Pythagoras, and afterwards of the self-denying sect of the Stoics, made himself, by his inordinate desire of amassing wealth, the richest man in Rome, and by his passion for splendor the most magnificent.

This inconsistency of profession with practice, at once illustrates the exact difference between speculation and conviction, conceit and truth; and serves, without any other arguments, which, however, are not wanting, to demonstrate the real character of Seneca. Though acquainted probably with the religion of Jesus Christ, and not improbably with our apostle himself, from his near connection with Gallio, one of Paul’s judges; yet he can never be considered as its convert; and trying them by the testimony of their lives, we are obliged to conclude of these two martyred moralists, that Paul lived a Christian, and Seneca died a heathen.

CHAP. XV.

On the genius of Christianity, as seen in St. Paul.

Had a sinful human being, ignorant of Christianity, laboring under the convictions of a troubled conscience, and dreading the retribution which that conscience told him his offence merited,—had such a being, so circumstanced, been called upon to devise the means of pardon and acceptance from an offended Creator, how eagerly, in the hope of relieving his tormented spirit, would he have put his imagination to the stretch! How busily would he have sharpened his invention, to suggest something difficult, something terrible, something impossible; something that should have exhausted all human means, that should put nature to the rack—penances, tortures, sacrifices,—all Lebanon for a
burnt offering, thousands of rams for an atonement, rivers of oil for an oblation,—still concluding that he must perform the act with his own hands, still expecting that himself must be the agent of his own deliverance.

But when a full offer of peace, of pardon, of reconciliation comes from the offended party, comes voluntarily, comes gratuitously, comes, not with the thunders of the burning mount, but in the still small voice of benignity and love,—free love, benignity, as unsought as unmerited;—when the trembling penitent is assured, in the cheering words of our apostle, that he shall be "justified freely, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,"—when he is assured that all that is demanded on his part of the compact is to accept the propitiation made for his sins, through the forbearance and tender mercy of God; when he hears that to him, and not to him only, but to all who will accept it on the offered terms of faith and repentance, this previously inconceivable proposal is made;—who would doubt that, overwhelmed with joy and gratitude at the report of a world redeemed, he would eagerly fly to lay hold on an offer, not only beyond his hope or expectation, but beyond his possibility of conception?

Yet is not the fact too often directly the reverse? His pride had suggested to him, that if some difficult thing were to be done, he should have done it himself,—if something were to be suffered in the way of hardship and austerity, or something achieved in the way of glorious enterprise; something that should be splendid in the act, which should bring renown to the doer,—then his natural powers would be set at work, his energies exerted, his emulation kindled, for he would then become the procurer of his own reward, the purchaser, or rather the rightful possessor of a heaven of his own earning.

But while God, by a way of his own devising, by a process of his own conducting, had made foolish the wisdom of this world, and baffled the vain and impracticable schemes of impotent man, for effecting his deliverance by any conception or act of his own,—does not man's unwillingness to partake of the offered mercy, look as if his proud heart did not choose to be freely forgiven, as if his haughty independence revolted at a plan, in which, though he has all the benefit, he has none of the merit? Does it not seem as if he would improve the terms of the treaty? as if he would mend the plan of salvation, and work it up into a kind of partnership scheme, in which his own contribution should have the predominance?
But it will be urged, men do not say this; we reply, they do not profess it in words: but do not some say it virtually, when they practically decline the terms; or, if they do not entirely disbelieve them, give at least a reluctant, and partial, and qualified assent?

With the genius of Christianity, with its peculiarities, with its applicableness to the wants of man, the whole soul of St. Paul was singularly imbued. His acute mind, his lofty qualities, his penetrating spirit, and his renovated heart, entered profoundly into the character and essence of the Gospel. His mind was a transcript of divine truth; his life an exemplification of it. What he conceived intimately, he imparted explicitly. To combat the rebellion of the natural man, against the salvation wrought for him, is the leading object of his endeavor. He who was always looking unto Jesus, as the author and finisher of his own faith, uniformly holds him out to others as the sum and substance of theirs.

He delights to dwell on the divine compassion; he introduces it under every form, he illustrates it by every figure, he magnifies it under every mode of expression. Reconciliation is the grand object of his mission. He exhibits the difference between the conduct of the Redeemer, and that of man, in this negotiation. In human cases it is usually the offender who makes the advances, who tries all means to recover the friend he has lost, the patron he has offended. But here he shows it to be just the reverse. Here it is the insulted benefactor, here it is the injured friend, who conjures the offender to return, who entreats the enemy to be reconciled, who promises not only pardon but immunity, not only oblivion but reward. The penitent is every where encouraged to believe, that his offences are forgiven, that his sins have been punished in his Saviour; that the Judge has not only pardoned the malefactor, but has suffered in his stead.

The apostle demonstrates, that God is the fountain, not only of our mercies, but of our virtues—if we turn, it is he who turns us—if we pray, it is he who invites us—if we apply to him, it is he who first draws us—if we repent, it is "the grace of God which leads us to repentance." Whatever right thing there may be in us, it is not our natural property, but his gift. His bounty is the spring from which our goodness, if we have any, flows, instead of our goodness being the original motive of his love.

Hitherto we have sketched, though very superficially, Christianity as to its spirit, its design, its offers. We now
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turn to what is our more immediate object, its practical effects, its general results, its transforming nature, its renovating power.

If the law of God is spiritual, it is not a conformity to its letter, nor is it partial conformity to its spirit, that constitutes Christian obedience. Christian obedience is ascertained by its universality. It esteems all God's precepts concerning all things to be right; it hates every false way. The prohibitory as well as the preceptive principle of the gospel is general. Though it makes much allowance for the infirmity of the act, it makes none as to its spirit; it confines its prescription to no particular duties, makes no exception for favorite virtues, to the exclusion of such as are more difficult, or less palatable. If Scripture had barely informed us, that it was the perfection of the Christian character, to unite in itself, not only different, but opposite qualities; if we had been only told that firmness is little worth, unless combined with meekness; that integrity is imperfect, if separated from humility; that the warmest zeal for the good of others, must, in order to be acceptable, be connected with the most vigilant attention to our own heart; that generosity is a spurious virtue, if disconnected with self-denial; that religion requires, with a consciousness of divinely infused strength, a deep sense of our own helplessness; that while it demands a trust in God, so complete, that we must renounce every other trust, it demands also a holiness so exact, as if we trusted only in ourselves.

If we had been only shown, in some thin theory, that it is the genius of Christianity thus to amalgamate contraries, to blend into one common principle, the deepest self-abasement with the most active exertions,—if all this had only been proposed to us in an abstract way, or drily and didactically taught, we should have conceived Christianity to be a system of pleasing paradoxes, an invention of beautiful impracticabilities; we should have thought it an institution fabricated for some world, different from ours, for some race of immaculate beings, for angels who had stood firm in their pristine purity, for creatures who had never lost the impression of the Divine image; but never could we have imagined it to be a practical religion, intended for the fallible, peccable children of fallen mortality.

It has, however, as we observed in an early chapter, pleased Infinite Wisdom to give us, in the sacred records, striking solutions of this enigma, actual instances of conflicting attributes in men of like passions with ourselves, men possessing qualities, which would seem to exclude
each other, combining contrarieties of excellence. Among these, there is not a brighter exemplification, than the great apostle of the Gentiles.

Yet there is nothing in this high description, which exclusively belongs to St. Paul. Nothing which does not address itself individually to us. Though converted by a miracle, favored with divine revelations, writing, and frequently acting, under immediate inspiration; yet was he, in the ordinary condition and transactions of life, weak and helpless. Though sustained by divine power, he did not monopolize it. Nor was it specially vouchsafed to him for his common comforts; or earthly deliverances. It was not given to rescue him from suffering, but to uphold him under it. He was, like his Lord, exposed to all the exigencies of a laborious and afflicted life. He was obnoxious to all its trials, liable to the snares of the world, and to the temptations of the great spiritual enemy. If his conflicts were more in number, and greater in magnitude than ours, he obtained victory over them, by a power to which he directs us, a power to which we have equal access. The same sincerity of petition will procure the same gracious assistance; that grand resolver of doubt, that omnipotent vanquisher of difficulty—my grace is sufficient for thee—though directly addressed to St. Paul, is also, through him, addressed to every one of us.

It was probably a charge brought against St. Paul, that his conversion contributed little to the improvement of his moral and civil virtues. But such an allegation, if made, must have come from the party which he had quitted. They considered him as an apostate from the faith; they considered his zeal for the religion which he had once persecuted, as a degrading inconsistency, as a defection from all moral goodness. His subsequent life, which afforded the most lively comment on the new doctrines, is the best answer to such an allegation. His perseverance afforded a rational conviction, that the change was neither the effect of fear nor of fancy. A conduct corresponding to his first emotions, and a continually growing excellence, completely repel the charge. He who in the first moment of alarm, exclaimed, what wilt thou have me to do? did through life all which he then desired to be taught.

Every convert should endeavor to produce in his measure and degree, the same proofs that he too is under no deception; he should give the same evidence, that he is misled by no fanciful illumination; and this can only be effected by exhibiting a change of conduct, not only obvious,
but permanent; not only during the first terrors or transports of which we so frequently hear, but by a steady consecration of his whole future life to his Creator. Every other plea may be illusion, may be hypocrisy; while this test, being visible, will be incontrovertible. The more the penitent is observed, the more this paramount evidence will eventually remove all doubts. By his patient continuance in well-doing, he will be likely to lessen the objection not only to the individual professing it, but to the doctrine itself.

When we compare this blessed apostle, who now fears to wound the feelings of others, with the same man who had lately no regard even for their lives; the man who now treats with tenderness the very prejudices of Christians, with him who "before made havoc of the church;"—the man whom we find weeping over all sufferings but his own, with him who had persecuted "to the death;" when we consider him who aforetime was "binding and imprisoning the followers of Jesus," now burning with zeal for his cause, though he knew that punishments the most severe awaited himself; him who had been assisting at the death of the first martyr, now heroically pursuing that course which he was forewarned would lead to his own martyrdom; the man who "destroyed them who called on the name of Jesus," now "confounding the Jews, and proving that this is indeed the very Christ"—shall we, when we see these astonishing results, refuse our homage to the transforming genius of Christianity—to that power which enabled this fierce assailant to "put off the old man with his deeds, and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness?"

St. Paul did not furnish such authentic evidence of that power of God which produced this total revolution in his character, merely by suffering death in confirmation of his faith—for error has had its confessors, and idolatry its martyrs,—but he proved it by the persevering holiness of a long and tormented life; he proved it, by suffering himself as courageously as he taught others to suffer. May we venture to add, he gave a testimony, less accredited perhaps, but almost more convincing. The conceited Pharisec is become the humblest of men; the proud bigot is meekness personified.—This change of disposition is the surest test of his total renovation. The infusion of a heavenly temper, where a bad one had predominated, is one of the rarest results of Almighty Power. And it not only affords a substantial proof of the individual improve-
ment, but furnishes one of the most striking displays of the distinguishing character of our religion. It is owing to this specific character of Christianity that, while philosophy had gloriéd in its wisdom, St. Paul gloriés only in his weakness. If he ever exults, it is in the strength of the hand which employs him. His confidence in this supernatural strength explains his paradox, when I am weak then I am strong. Sometimes, indeed, he boasts of himself, but it is always of his disadvantages. He avows his determination not to avail himself of any personal acquirements; and after his utmost success in "winning souls," he expressly disclaims that excellency of speech which others consider as the grand instrument for converting them. He strips himself of all ground of boasting; acknowledges that he comes in weakness, in fear, in much trembling; and requires that the glory of every success which attended his labors might be wholly ascribed to God. He demonstrates that all the wisdom with which the world had been dazzled, was to be eclipsed by that hidden wisdom "which none of the princes of this world knew," and their ignorance of which was the only extenuation that he offers of their guilt in "crucifying the Lord of glory."

The same trials seem in some measure to have been reserved for St. Paul which had been sustained by his Lord. This was perhaps determined, that he might glorify God by meeting them in the same spirit; and thus might leave a human example of the highest Christian attainment. Of Jesus it is recorded, that "his disciples all forsook him and fled." Like him St. Paul declared, in his last appearance before the Roman tribunal, "no man stood by me, but all men forsook me." As the Master had prayed for his cruel enemies,—"Father forgive them, for they know not what they do," so Paul interceded for his faithless—"I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge." Even under this severest blow to natural feelings, the desertion of those we love, holy Paul forgets not to glorify "the Lord, who stood by him, and strengthened him;" and who enabled him to act a part consistent with his Christian profession, and to bear an honorable testimony to the truth of the Gospel before his persecuting judges.

Thus again did he resemble his great Exemplar, "who, before Pontius Pilate, witnessed a good confession." And may we not suppose that this example of heroic constancy assisted in sustaining our Latimers and our Ridleys, when, by manifesting a similar spirit under similar sufferings,
they showed their cause and their confidence to be so nearly allied to those of the apostle?

Nor does Christianity, (as we shall have occasion to observe more at large hereafter,) limit the exercise of this temper to apostles and martyrs, but enjoins it under the inferior trials of common life.

Finally, the judgments of heaven bore the same kind of testimony to the truth of the Gospel, in the prison at Philippi, as it had done on the Mount of Calvary. In the one instance, "Behold the veil of the temple was rent in twain, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent." In the other, "Suddenly there was a great earthquake, the foundations of the prison were shaken, the doors were opened, the chains were loosened, the captives were freed, the jailor was converted!" Are not all these circumstances, taken together, a clear solution of St. Paul's otherwise obscure declaration, that he thus filled up what remained of the sufferings of Christ? Did the sense of victory, did the joys of peace, did the honorable scars brought from the field of battle, ever excite such a feeling in the mind of the conqueror, as St. Paul felt at thus bearing in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus, and at the encouragement they gave him to achieve new conquests?

What a strange use does Paul immediately make of his scourgings and imprisonment at Philippi? He uses them as an argument why his entrance into Thessalonica was not in vain! His shameful treatment at the former place, instead of intimidating him from further services, redoubled his courage to preach to the Thessalonians that very Gospel which had procured him such disgraceful treatment at Philippi. On this occasion he adduces a touching instance of the effect of his imprisonment, which, though striking, is not singular to those who understand the genius of Christianity. His unjust captivity, as the champion of the new faith, which, in the opinion of those to whom the motive principle of our religion is unknown, would have been likely to extinguish the flame, had only served in his estimation to fan it. Others, timid before, "grew more confident," by the very bonds which were intended to discourage them. Their fears were absorbed in their faith, and the chains of the saint caused a wider and more rapid diffusion of that Gospel which they were intended to stop. And though "some preached Christ of contention," yet holy Paul was so exhilarated by the general success, that he was less solicitous about the motives of the instructor, than the progress of the instruction. He looked for the
benefit rather from the power of the Gospel, than from the purity of the preacher.

We have repeatedly observed, that an ardent affection was one of the prominent features in St. Paul's character: it is natural, therefore, that the expression of this temper should be particularly stamped on his writings. If he expresses this satisfaction with more unmingled delight to any one church than another, it seems to be to that which he had planted at Philippi. He appears to repose himself with grateful joy on their fidelity, and with assured hope in their progress. In every prayer he makes request for them, with a joy, which manifested the dependence he had on their perseverence. This was a proof that his "confidence" did not abate the necessity of his supplications, though he made them with a joy which this confidence inspired. While his knowledge of the fluctuations of the human heart led him to rejoice with trembling, yet the continuance of this favored church in the principles into which they had been initiated by his visit to them ten years before, gave him a reasonable ground of their persevering steadfastness.

This church afforded an eminent proof not only of its attachment to Paul, its founder, but of its zeal for Christianity. Not satisfied with advancing the credit of religion, and assisting its ministers in their own country, with a truly catholic spirit, these Philippian converts repeatedly sent money to Paul at Thessalonica, that, by relieving the Christians there from the expense which would attend the establishment of the Gospel, they might be led to conceive a higher idea of the religion itself by the disinterestedness of its ministers. This generous superiority to any lucrative views, gave Paul a marked advantage over their philosophical teachers, who bestowed no gratuitous instruction.

The apostle gratefully considers it as one of the practical effects of the confirmed piety of his beloved Philippians, that they were so liberally kind to himself; he received their affectionate services to the aged, afflicted, and now imprisoned servant of Jesus Christ, as a proof of their fealty to his Lord. An ambassador, though in bonds, will still be considered as a representative of his king, by every liege subject. With what cordiality does he solemnly attest the Omniscient to the truth of his attachment to them, and his desire to see them!

Highly, however, as he estimates their religious improve-ment, he does not consider them as having attained that elevation of character which renders monition superfluous,
or advancement unnecessary; for he exhorts even "as many as be perfect," that they press forward and reach forth unto those things which are before: in his usual humble way identifying himself with those he is admonishing—"Let us be thus minded."

Again.—"Though he is confident that he that begun a good work in them," will accomplish it, yet they must still work out their salvation; but lest they might be tempted to value themselves on their exertions, they are instantly reminded who it is that "worketh in them to will and to do." Though they professed the Gospel, "their conversation must be such as becometh it." To accomplish his full desire, their love, already so great, must "abound more and more." Nor would he be satisfied with an ignorant or disorderly piety—their love must manifest itself more and more "in knowledge and judgment:" in knowledge, by a perpetual acquisition; in judgment, by a practical application of that knowledge.

How little, in the eyes of the sober Christian, does the renowned Roman, who, scarcely half a century before, sacrificed his life to his appointment, at this very Philippi, appear, in comparison of the man who addressed this epistle to the same city! St. Paul was not less brave than Brutus, but his magnanimity was of a higher strain. Paul was exercised in a long series of sufferings, from which the sword of Brutus, directed by any hand but that of Paul himself, would have been a merciful deliverance. Paul, too, was a patriot, and set a proper value on his dignity as a Roman citizen. He too was a champion for freedom, but he fought for that higher species of liberty

"Unsung by poets, and by senators unpraised."

Was it courage of the best sort, in the Roman enthusiast for freedom, to abandon his country to her evil destiny, at the very moment when she most needed his support? Was it true generosity or patriotism, after having killed his friend, to whom he owed his fortune and his life,* usurper though he was, voluntarily to leave this adored country a prey to inferior usurpers? Though Caesar had robbed Rome of her liberty, should Brutus rob her of his own guardian virtues? Why not say to the Romans, as Paul did to the Philippians—Though I desire to depart, nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you! This would have been indeed patriotism, because it would have been disinterested. Was not Paul's the truer hero-

* At the battle of Pharsalia.
ism? He also was in a strait between two events, life and death. He knew, what Brutus, alas! did not know, "that to die was gain;" but, instead of deserting his cause, by a pusillanimous self-murder, he submitted to live for its interest. The gloomy despair of the stoic, and the cheerful submission of the saint, present a lively contrast of the effects of the two religions on two great souls.

It is a coincidence too remarkable to be passed over in silence, that Paul was directed by "a vision from heaven" to go to Philippi; that Brutus was summoned to the same city by his evil genius. The hero obeyed the phantom; the apostle was "not disobedient to the heavenly vision;" to what different ends, let the concluding histories of the devoted suicide and the devoted martyr declare! Will it be too fanciful to add, that the spectre which lured the Roman to his own destruction, and the vision which in the same place invited the apostle to preach salvation to others, present no unapt emblem of the opposite genius of Paganism and Christianity.

CHAP. XVI.

St. Paul's respect for constituted authorities.

The Gospel was never intended to dissolve the ancient ties between sovereign and subject, master and servant, parent and child, but rather to draw them closer, to strengthen a natural by a lawful and moral obligation. As the charge of disaffection was, from the first, most injurious to the religion of Jesus, it is obvious why the apostle was so frequent, and so earnest, in vindicating it from this calumny.

It is apparent from every part of the New Testament, that our Lord never intended to introduce any change into the civil government of Judea, where he preached, nor into any part of the world to which his religion might extend. As his object was of a nature specifically different, his discourses were always directed to that other object. His politics were uniformly conversant about his own kingdom, which was not of this world. If he spake of human governments at all, it was only incidentally, as circumstances led to it, and as it gave occasion to display or enforce some act of obedience. He discreetly entangled the Pharisees in the insidious net which they had spread for him, by d -
recting, in answer to their ensnaring question, that the things which belonged even to the sovereign whom they detested, should be "rendered" to him.

St. Paul exhibited at once a striking proof of the soundness of his own principles, and of the peaceable character of Christianity, in his full and explicit exposition of the allegiance due to the ruling powers. His thorough conviction that human nature was, and would be, the same in all ages, led him to anticipate the necessity of impressing on his converts the duty of rescuing the new religion, not only from present reproach, but from that obloquy to which he foresaw that it would always be exposed.

He knew that a seditious spirit had been alleged against his Lord. He knew, that as it was with the master so it must be with the servant. One was called a "pestilent fellow;" another, "a stirrer-up of the people:" others were charged with "turning the world upside down." These charges, invented and propagated by the Jews, were greedily adopted by the persecuting Roman emperors, and their venal instruments; and have always been seized on and brought forward as specious pretences for exile, proscription, massacre.

Many of the Protestant Reformers were afterwards accused, or suspected, of the same factious disposition; and if a similar accusation has not been boldly produced, it has been insidiously implied, against some of the most faithful friends of the government, and of the ecclesiastical constitution of our own country; as if a more than ordinary degree of religious activity rendered their fidelity to the state suspicious, and their hostility to the church certain. We do not deny, that though Christianity has never been the cause, it has often been made the pretence for disaffection. Religion has been made the handle of ambition by Popery, and of sedition by some of the Puritan Reformers. Corruptions in both cases was stamped upon the very face of those who so used it. Nothing, however, can be more unfair, than eagerly to charge religious profession with such dangers, which yet the instances alluded to have given some of our high churchmen a plausible plea for always doing. This plea, though in certain cases justly furnished, has been most unjustly used by being applied to instances to which it is completely inapplicable.

For the truth is, that a factious spirit is so far from having any natural connection with the religion of the Gospel, that it stands in the most direct opposition to it. St. Paul, in taking particular care to vindicate Christianity from any
such aspersions, shows that obedience to constituted authorities is among the express commands of our Saviour. He might have added to the strength of his assertion, by adducing his example also; for, in order to be enabled to comply with a law of government, Christ did, what he had never done to supply his own necessities—he wrought a miracle.

The apostle knowing the various shifts of men, from their natural love of gain, to evade paying imposts, is not content with a general exhortation on this head, but urges the duty in every conceivable shape, and under every variety of name, as if to prevent the possibility of even a verbal subterfuge—tribute, custom, fear, love, honor, fidelity in payment; and then, having exhausted particulars, he sums them up in a general—one no man any thing. Thus he leaves not only no public opening, but no secret crevice to fiscal fraud.*

Perhaps it is an evidence, in this instance, rather of the sagacious, than of the prescient, spirit which governed St. Paul, that there is as much tendency to it now, as when the apostle first published his prohibitory letter. The known principles of human nature, as we have just observed, might lead us to expect it alike in all ages. At the same time, we cannot be too mindful of that command of inspiration, which, by enjoining us to render to all their dues, has enlarged the sphere of civil duty to the very utmost limit of human actions. And it is no little credit to Christianity, that intimations are so frequently repeated, by all the apostles to all classes of society, that their having become Christians was the very reason why all their lawful obligations should be the more scrupulously discharged.

St. Peter and St. Paul preach the same doctrine, but most judiciously apply their injunctions to the different modes of government under which their several converts lived. St. Peter, who wrote to the strangers scattered through Pontus, Asia, &c. where the governments were arbitrary, orders them first to obey the king as supreme. St. Paul, addressing the people of Rome, where it is well known the emperor and the senate did not always act in concurrence, with his usual exquisite prudence makes choice of an ambiguous expression, the higher powers, without specifically determining what those powers were.

Loyalty is a cheap quality, where a good government makes a happy people. It is then an obligation, without being a virtue. That every man should be obedient to the existing powers, is a very easy injunction to us, who are

* Romans, xiii.
iving under the mildest government, and the most virtuous king. When Paul enjoined his beloved disciple "to put the people in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates,"—had the episcopal Titus been acting under the merciful government of the imperial Titus, Paul might have been denied any merit in giving this authoritative mandate, or the bishop in obeying it: it might have been urged, that the injunctions were accommodated to a sovereign whose commands it would be unreasonable to dispute.

The submission which St. Paul practised and taught was a trial of a higher order, but though hard, it was not too hard for his principles. To enjoin and to practise implicit obedience, where Nero was the supreme authority, furnished him with a fair occasion for exhibiting his sincerity on this point. Never let it be forgotten for the honor of Christianity, and of the apostle who published it, that Paul chose to address his precepts of civil obedience to the Christians at Rome, under the most tyrannical of all their tyrants. He commands them to submit for conscience sake, to a sovereign, who,—their enemy, Tacitus, gives the relation,—made the martyrdom of the Christians his personal diversion; who burnt them alive by night in the streets, that the flames might light him to the scene of his licentious pleasures.

In the first three centuries, till the Roman government became Christian, there is not, we believe, an instance upon record, of any insurrection against legitimate authority. Tertullian, in his "Apology," challenges the Pagans to produce a single instance of sedition, in which any of the Christians had been concerned; though their numbers were become so great, as to have made their opposition formidable, while the well-known cruel and vengeful principle of their oppressors would have rendered it desperate. Even that philosophical politician Montesquieu acknowledged, that in those countries where Christianity had even imperfectly taken root, rebellions have been less frequent than in other places.

Nor did St. Paul indemnify himself for his public submission, by privately villifying the lawful tyrant: the emperor is not only not named, but is not pointed at. There is not one of those sly inuendos, which the artful subverters of states know how to employ, when they would undermine the stability of law, without incurring its penalty. He betrays no symptom of an exasperating spirit, lurking behind the shelter of prudence, and the screen of legal security
It is observable, that in the very short period, from the origin of Christianity under Augustus to the time at which St. Paul wrote, there were four successive Roman emperors, each of whom was worse than the preceding, as if it had been providentially so determined, as a test of the meek and quiet spirit of Christianity, whose followers never manifested resistance to any of these oppressive masters.

Paul knew how to unite a respect for the government, with a just abhorrence of the vices of the governor. We are not advocating the cause of passive obedience—but it may be fairly observed, in this connection, that political passions are so apt to inflame the whole mind, that it is dangerous for those, who are professionally devoted to the service of religion, to be too powerfully influenced by them.

I believe there has been no government, under which Christianity has not been able to subsist. When the ruling powers were lenient to it, and especially when they afforded it protection, it has advanced in secular prosperity, and external grandeur; when they have been intolerant, its spirit has received a fresh internal impulse; it has improved in spiritual vigor, as if it had considered oppression only as a new scene for calling new graces into exercise.

With the specific nature of the populace, in all countries, Paul was well acquainted. He knew that till religion has operated on their hearts, they have but one character. Of this character we have many correct, though slight sketches, in the New Testament. Now we hear the stupid clamor of the Ephesian idolators, vociferating, for two hours, their one phrase. Then we see that picture of a mob, so exactly alike in all ages, from the uproar in the streets of Ephesus, to the riots in the streets of Westminster; "the greater part knew not wherefore they were come together." On another occasion, "the certainty could not be known for the tumult." Then their mutable caprice, changing with the impulse of the event, or of the moment. When the viper fastened on Paul's hand, "he was a murderer," when he shook it off unhurt, "he was a god." † At Lystra the same people who had offered him divine honors, no sooner heard the false reports of the Jews from Antioch, than they stoned him and dragged him out of the city as a dead man." ‡ It was the very spirit which dictated the "Hosanna" of one day, and the "crucify him" of the next.

St. Paul well knew these wayward motions of the mob. He knew also that, without the faculty of thinking, their gregarious habit gave them a physical force, which was a

substitute for rational strength; and that this instinctive and headlong following the herd, without reason, without consistency, makes them as formidable by their aggregate number, as they are inconsiderable by their individual weight. Yet, did he ever attempt to turn the knowledge, in which he was so well versed, to a political purpose? Did he ever cajole the multitude, as an engine to lift himself into power or popularity? Did he consider them, as some designing orators have done, the lowest round in ambition’s ladder, by which, its foot fixed in the dirt, they strive to scale the summit of public favor; alluring by flattery beings they despise, and paying them by promises, which they know they shall never be able to keep.

St. Paul’s love of order is an additional proof of the soundness of his political character. He uses his influence with the vulgar, only to lead them to obedience. Nor did he content himself with verbal instructions to obey; he seconded them by a method the most practically efficient. Together with order itself, he enjoined on the people those industrious habits which are the very soul of order. He was a most rigorous punisher of idleness, that powerful cherisher of insubordination in the lower orders. Not to eat was the penalty he inflicted on those who would not work. He commands the Thessalonian converts “to correct the disorderly” —again enjoining, that “with quietness they work and eat their own bread.” “Stirrers up of the people” never command them to work: and though they promise them bread, knowing they shall never be able to give it to them, yet they do not, like Paul, command them to eat it in peace. By thus encouraging peaceable and laborious habits, he was at once ensuring the comforts of the people, and the security of the state. Are these exhortations, is this conduct, any proof of that tendency to faction, which has been so often charged on the religion of Jesus?

In his political discretion, as well as in all other points, Paul imitates his Lord. Jesus, in the earlier part of his ministry, was extremely cautious of declaring who he was, never but once owned himself to be the Messiah; when at last, knowing “that his hour was come,” he scrupled not to express his resentment publicly against the Sanhedrin, by almost the only strong expression of indignation, which Infinite Wisdom, clothed in Infinite Meekness, ever thought fit to use. Even then, he said nothing against the civil governor.

But while Paul thus proved himself a firm supporter of established authorities, as such, he would not connive at
any formal act of injustice; while he resigned himself to the Roman powers, his lawful judges, he would not submit to be condemned illegally by the Jews. When he appealed to Caesar, he declared with a dignified firmness becoming his character, that though he refused not to die, he would be tried by the rightful judicature.

If it be objected, that, in a single instance, he sharply rebuked Ananias for violating the law, by commanding him to be punished unjustly; he immediately cleared himself from the charge of contumacy, by declaring "he knew not that it was the High Priest;" and instantly took occasion to extract a maxim of obedience from his own error; and to render it more impressive sanctioned it by scriptural authority, "It is written, thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." *

It must have been obvious to his Pagan judges, that he never interfered with their rights, or even animadverted on their corruptions. His real crime in their eyes, was, not his intermeddling with government, but his converting the people. It was by exposing the impositions of their mercenary priests, by declaring their idols ought not to be worshipped, that he inflamed the magistrates; and they were irritated, not so much as civil governors, as guardians of their religion. He knew the consequences of his persevering fidelity, and like a true servant of the true God, never shrunk from them.

To complete the character of his respect to authorities, he sanctifies loyalty, by connecting it with piety. He expressly exhorts the new bishop of the Ephesians,† that throughout his Episcopal jurisdiction, "prayers, intercession, and giving of thanks be made for kings and all in authority;"—and adds, as a natural consequence of the obligation, arising from the reciprocal connection, "that subjects may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty." There could not have been devised a more probable method of insuring allegiance; for would it not be preposterous to injure or vilify those, for whom we make it a conscience to pray?

Yet even this important duty may be over-estimated, when men’s submission to kings is considered as paramount to their duty to "another king, one Jesus." An instance of this we have seen exemplified in our own time, though it has pleased Almighty Goodness to overrule it to the happiest results. And among the triumphs of religion which we have witnessed, it is not the least considerable, that.

* Acts, ch. xxiii.  † Timothy
whereas Christianity was originally charged with a design to overturn states and empires, we have seen the crime completely turned over to the accusers; we have seen the avowed adversaries of Christ become the strenuous subverters of order, law, and government.

To name only one of the confederated band:—Voltaire had reached the pinnacle of literary fame and general admiration, not, it is to be hoped, for his impiety, but in spite of it. The fearful consequences of his audacious blasphemies were hid behind those graces of style, that gay wit, those fascinating pleasantries, that sharp, yet bitter raillery, which, if they did not conceal the turpitude, decorated it, and obtained, for his profaneness, something more than pardon. His boldness increased with his impunity. He carried it with a high hand, against the whole scheme of revelation; substituting ridicule for argument, and assertion for fact; and then, reasoning from his own misrepresentations, as consequentially as if he had found the circumstancies he invented.

But the missile arrows of his lighter pieces, barbed, pointed, and envenomed, (the exact characters of that slender weapon) proved the most destructive in his warfare upon Christianity; and he could replenish his exhaustless quiver, with the same unparalleled celerity with which he emptied it. The keen sagacity of his mind taught him, that witty wickedness is of all the most successful. Argumentative impiety hurts but few, and generally those who were hurt before. Besides it requires in the reader a talent, or at least a taste, congenial with the writer; in this idle age it requires also the rare quality of patient investigation; a quality not to be generally expected, when our reading has become almost as dissipated as our pleasures, and as frivolous as our conversation.

For though Voltaire contrived to make every department of literature the medium of corruption; though the most unpromising and least suspected vehicles were pressed into the service to assist his ruling purpose; yet historical falsehoods might be refuted by advertising to purer sources, unfair citations might be contradicted, by referring to the originals. The popular engine of mischief is not the art of reasoning, but the art of raillery. The danger lies not in the attempt to prove a thing to be false, so much as in the talent which aims to make what is true, ridiculous; not so much in attacking, as in mistaking, not in inverting, but in discoloring.

Metaphysical mischief is tedious to the trifling, and dull
to the lively. Who now reads the "Leviathan?" Who has not read Candide? "Political Justice," a more recent work, subversive of all religious and social order, was too ponderous to be popular, and too dry to answer the end of general corruption. But when the substance, by that chemical process well known to the preparers of poison, was rubbed down into an amusing novel, then it began to operate; the vehicle, though made pleasant, did not lessen the deleterious quality.

In Voltaire, a sentiment that cut up hope by the roots was compressed into a phrase as short as the motto of a ring, and as sparkling as the brilliants which encompass it. Every one can repeat an epigram, and even they who cannot understand, can circulate it. The fashionable laughed before they had time to think; the dread of not being supposed to have read, what all were reading, stimulated those who read, in order that they might talk. Little wits came to sharpen their weapons at the forge of this Philistine, or to steal small arms from his arsenal.

The writer of these pages has not forgotten the time when it was a sort of modish competition who could first produce proof that they had received the newest pamphlet from Ferney, by quoting from it; and they were gratified to find that the attributes of intelligence and good taste were appended to their gay studies. Others indulged with a sort of fearful delight, in the perilous pleasure. Even those who could not read, without indignation, did not wait, without impatience. Each successive work, like the book in the Apocalypse, was "so sweet in the mouth," that they forgot to anticipate the bitterness of the digestion. Or, to borrow a more awful illustration from the same divine source, "A star fell from heaven on the waters, burning like a lamp, and the star was called Wormwood; and many died of the waters, because they were made bitter." That bright genius, which might have illuminated the world, became a destructive flame, and, like the burning brand thrown by the Roman soldier into the temple of Jerusalem, carried conflagration into the sanctuary.

At length, happily for rescuing the principles, but most injuriously for the peace and safety of society, the polished courtier became a furious anarchist. The idol of monarchical France, the equalized associate of the royal author of Berlin, changed his political note; the parasite of princes, and the despot of literature, sounded the trumpet of Jacobinism. The political and moral world shook to their foundation. Earth below trembled. Heaven above threat-
ened. All was insecurity. Order seemed reverting to original chaos. The alarm was given. Britain first awoke, roused by the warning voice of Burke. Enthusiasm was converted into detestation. The horror which ought to have been excited by his impiety was reserved for his democracy. But it was found that he could not subvert thrones with the same impunity with which he had labored to demolish altars. He gave, indeed, the same impulse to sedition, which he had long given to infidelity, and by his own activity increased the velocity of both. The public feeling was all alive, and his political principles justly brought on his name that reprobation which had been long due to his blasphemies, but which his blasphemies had failed to excite.

Divine Providence seems to have spared him to extreme old age, that by adding one crime more to his long catalogue, his political outrages might counteract his moral mischiefs. But his wisdom seems to have been equally short-sighted in both his projects. While the consequences of his designs against the governments of the world, probably outran his intentions, his scheme for the extinction of Christianity, and for the obliteration of the very name of its author, fell short of it. Peace, law, and order are restored to the desolated nations. Kings are reinstated on their rightful thrones, and many of the subjects of the King of kings, it is hoped, are returned to their allegiance.

The abilities of this powerful but pernicious genius, were not more extraordinary than their headlong, yet diversified course. His talents took their bent from the turn of the age in which he was cast. His genius was his own, but its determination was given from without. He gave impressions as forcibly, as he yielded to them suddenly. It was action and reaction. He lighted on the period, in which, of all others, he was born to produce the most powerful sensation. The public temper was agitated; he helped on the crisis. Revolt was ripening; he matured it. Circumstances suggested his theories; his theories influenced circumstances. He was inebriated with flattery, and mad with success; but his delirious vanity defeated its own ends; in his greediness for instant adoration he neglected to take future fame into his bold but brief account;—

"Vaulting ambition overleap'd itself,
And fell on t'other side."
CHAP. XVII.

St. Paul's attention to Inferior Concerns.

It is one great advantage of epistolary writing, that it is not subject to the general laws of composition, but admits of every diversity of miscellaneous matter. Topics which might be thought beneath the dignity of a treatise, or inconsistent with the solemnity of a sermon, or the gravity of a dissertation, find their proper place in a letter. Details which are not of the first importance, may yet be of such a nature as to require notice or animadversion.

The epistolary form has also other advantages; it not only admits of a variety of subjects, but of the most abrupt transition, from one subject to another, however dissimilar. It requires not the connecting links of argumentative composition, nor the regularity of historical, nor the uniformity of ethical; nor the method and arrangement of each and of all these. The free mind, unfettered by critical rules, expatiates at will, soars or sinks, skims or dives, as the objects of its attention may be elevated or depressed, profound or superficial.

Of the character of this species of writing, the authors of epistles of the New Testament have most judiciously availed themselves. St. Paul, especially, has taken all due advantage of the latitude it allows. His epistles, though they contain the most profound reasoning, and on the most important subjects on which the mind of man can be engaged, are not, exclusively, regular discussions of any set topics; though they breathe strains of devotion almost angelic, yet do they also frequently stoop to the concerns of ordinary life: partaking, as occasion requires, of all that familiarity, versatility, and ease, which this species of writing authorizes. Yet though occasional topics and incidental circumstances are introduced, each epistle has some particular drift, tends to some determined point, and, amidst frequent digressions, still maintains a consistency with itself, as well as with the general tendency of Scripture; the method being sometimes concealed, and the chain of argument not obvious, the closest attention is required, and the reader, while he may be gathering much solid instruction, reproof or consolation, from scattered sentences, and independent axioms, will not, without much application of mind, embrace the general argument.
Amidst, however, all the higher parts of spiritual instruction; amidst all the solidity of deep practical admonition, there is not, perhaps, a single instance in which this author has omitted to inculcate any one of the little morals, any one even of what may be called those minor circumstances, which constitute the decorums and decencies of life. Nor does his zeal for promoting the greatest actions, ever make him unmindful of the grace, the propriety, the manner in which they are to be performed.

It is one of the characteristic properties of a great mind that it can, "contract as well as dilate itself;" and we have it from one of the highest human authorities, that the mind which cannot do both is not great in its full extent.* The minuter shades of character do not of themselves make up a valuable person; they may be possessed in perfection, separate from great excellence. But as that would be a feeble mind, which should be composed of inferior qualities only, so that would be an imperfect one, in which they were wanting. To all the strong lines of character, St. Paul added the lighter touches, the graceful filling up which finish the portrait.

In a character which forcibly exhibits all the great features of Christianity, these subordinate properties do not only make up its completeness, they give also an additional evidence of the truth and perfection of a religion which makes such a provision for virtue, as to determine that nothing which is right, however inconsiderable, can be indifferent. The attention to inferior duties is a symptom of a mind not satisfied with its attainments, not so full of itself, as to fancy that it can afford to be negligent; it is indicative of a mind humble enough to be watchful, because it is suspicious of itself; of a conscience ever on its guard, that its infirmities may not grow into vices, nor its occasional neglects into allowed omissions. But it is chiefly anxious, that its imperfections may not be brought as a charge against religion itself; for may not its enemies say, if he is neglectful of small and easy duties, which cost little, is it probable that he will be at much pains about such as are laborious and difficult? St. Paul never leaves an opening for this censure. He always seems to have thought small avenues worth guarding, small kindnesses worth performing, small negligences worth avoiding; and his constant practical creed is, that nothing that is a sin is small; that nothing that is right is insignificant. But St. Paul was an accurate master of moral proportion. He took

* Lord Bacon.
an exact measure of the positive and relative value of things. If he did not treat small objects as great ones—if he did not lift proprieties into principles, he by no means overlooked them; he never wholly neglected them. He graduated the whole scale of doctrine, and of action, of business and of opinion, assigning to every thing its place according to its worth.

Though he did not think the dissension in religious opinions between two individuals, Euodias and Syntyche* of as much importance as the contentions and schisms in the church of the Corinthians, yet he thought it of sufficient importance to be healed; and anxiously desired to reconcile them, to "make them of one mind in the Lord." He knew that disunion is not only unfavorable to the piety of the persons at variance, but that, while it gratifies the enemies, it injures the cause of religion.

But if he gives their due importance to inferior, though necessary duties, he draws a still nicer line in regard to matters in themselves indifferent. The eaters of herbs and the eaters of flesh are alike, in his estimation, as to the act; but when the indulgence in the latter becomes a temptation to an undecided believer, then, even this trifling concession was no longer a matter of indifference. It became then a just ground for the exercise of self-denial, which perhaps he was not sorry to have the opportunity of enforcing.

He knew that there were persons who profess to have made a great proficiency in piety, who are not defective in point of cheap attainment, but are defective in the more difficult attainments which involve self-denial; persons who, though very spiritual in their conversation, are somewhat selfish in their habits; who talk much of faith, and yet decline the smallest sacrifice of ease; who profess to do all for Christ, but do little for his poor members. He wished to see a high profession always accompanied with a corresponding practice. The Israelites, who were so forward to exclaim, "all that the Lord hath commanded us we will do," went and made them a golden calf.

In the mind of our apostle, all is consistent. He that said, "Let the same mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus," said also, let all things be done decently and in order. Right things must be done in a right manner. This simple precept indicates the soberness of Paul's mind. An enthusiast has seldom much dislike to disorderly conduct; on the contrary, he has generally a sovereign contempt for small points, indeed for every thing which does not exclu-

* Philippians, ch. iv
sively tend to advance the one object, whatever that may be, which is nearest his heart.

St. Paul sometimes appends small objects to great ones, thus increasing their importance by their position. Immediately after giving his exquisite portrait of charity,* he goes at once to recommend and enforce, by powerful illustrations, certain proprieties of behavior in the public congregations. Knowing the readiness of the world to catch at the slightest irregularity in religious professors, he puts them on their guard "not to let their good be evil spoken of;" but wishes that they might acquit themselves unexceptionably as to manner, in things which were already right as to the matter.

From the high duties of episcopal dignity, he stoops to the concerns of individuals of the most degraded condition. From the most important points of moral action in women, he descends to the very minutiae of their apparel. This indicates how well aware he was, that every appearance of impropriety in personal adornment, is an implication of a wrong state of mind. If this seemingly inferior concern was not judged to be beneath the notice of an inspired apostle, surely it ought not to be unworthy the regard of my fair countrywomen.

One might have suspected, in the case of Paul, that the heavy load of cares, and sorrows, and persecutions; with the addition of ecclesiastical affairs, the most extensive and the most complicated, might have excused him from attending minutely to an object so inconsiderable, as the concerns of a poor runaway slave, "the son of his bonds."

Yet this once guilty, but now penitent servant, he descends to make the exclusive subject of a letter to his late master.† This application to Philemon, in behalf of Onesimus, is a model in its kind; sincere, polite, tenderly affectionate to the convicted offender; strong, yet respectfully kind to his friend. In point of elegance and delicacy, in every excellence of composition, it may vie with any epistle of antiquity; and is certainly far superior, in ingenuity, feeling, warmth, and argument, to the admired letter of Pliny, in recommendation of his friend Arrianus Maturius.

There are people who sometimes forgive the piety of a man, in consideration of his influence, his reputation, his talents, or some other agreeable quality connected with it. Genius is accepted by the world as a sort of atonement for religion; and wit has been known to obtain the forgive-

* 1 Corinthians, ch. xiii, and xiv.  † Epistle to Philemon.
ness of the gay, for the strict principles of the grave. Here is a striking instance of two persons, connected by the closest ties of Christian friendship, who acted on other grounds. Philemon was not ashamed of his pious friend Paul, though a prisoner; nor was Paul ashamed of Onesimus, though a servant.

In urging his request on his friend, the apostle does not adopt the corrupt practice of too many, who, in order to put the person addressed in good humor, preface their petition by flattering him on some point, where, perhaps, he least deserves it. Paul, notwithstanding he would have reprobated such insincerity, yet thought it fair to remind Philemon of his high principles; thus indirectly to furnish him with a standard to which he expected his friend would act up.

He then proceeds to press his suit, with all the variety of argument and persuasion of which he was so great a master. His earnestness of entreaty, for so inconsiderable an object, conveys a lesson to ministers and to heads of families, that there is no human being so low as to be beneath their kindness; no offender so great as to be beyond their hope.

He had opened his request with a motive the most calculated to touch the heart of a Christian friend—that he always made mention of him in his prayers. This tender plea he follows up with the affectionate commendation of his Christian virtue, that the friend he was beseeching abounded in love and faith, not only "to the Lord Jesus, but to all saints."

After this soothing address, he urges his claims to the boon he was about to ask; in doing which, though he had been always mindful of the dignity of his apostleship, he chose rather to sink this consideration in the more tender pleas of affection to his friend, and the distressed state of the person for whom he petitioned. "Paul the aged, and a prisoner of Jesus Christ," were touching and powerful motives: but what was likely to penetrate a generous mind, was, that the aged and imprisoned Paul, in sending back the penitent servant to his own master, and depriving himself of his attendance, was at once performing an act of justice and of self-denial. He would not detain him from his rightful owner, though he was so great a comfort to himself in his forlorn confinement. It was also a fine occasion of pressing on Onesimus, that the return to his duty would be the surest evidence of his conversion.

Thus anxiously, for an offending slave, does he seek to
touch every spring of pity in the heart of his friend. Who would imagine that the man, who thus labors the cause of so obscure an individual, had the superintendence of all the Christian churches in the world?

But, with Paul, rectitude is always the prevailing principle. His zeal for his convert never makes him lose sight of the duty of restitution. Destitute, and a prisoner himself, he offers to make good the loss which Philemon might have sustained by his servant's misconduct. He candidly reminds him, however, how much the spiritual obligations of Philemon (his convert also) exceeded in value the debt due to him from Onesimus; though he refuses to avail himself of the plea. Thy servant perhaps owes thee a paltry sum of money—thou owest me thine own self.

With his characteristic disinterestedness, he not only thus pathetically pleads for him who was to receive the good, but for him who was to do it; as if he had said—Give me ground to rejoice in this evidence of thy Christian benevolence. He farther stimulates him to this act of charity, by declaring the confidence he had in his obedience; thus encouraging him to the duty, by intimating the certainty of his compliance. An additional lesson is given to religious professors, not only that their being Christians includes their being charitable, but that no act of charity should infringe on the rights of justice.

We conclude, by remarking on the union of judgment and kindness in St. Paul’s conduct respecting Onesimus. He sends him back to Philemon at Colosse, as a proof, on the part of Onesimus, of penitent humility, and, on the part of Paul, of impartial equity. At the same time, he more than takes away his disgrace, by honoring him with the office, in conjunction with Tychicus, of being the bearer of his public epistle to the Colossian church. He confers on him the farther honor of naming him, in the body of his epistle, as a faithful and beloved brother.

How different is this modest and rational report by an inspired apostle, of a penitent criminal, a convert of his own; one who had survived his crimes long enough to prove the sincerity of his repentance by the reformation of his life;—how different is this sober narrative by a writer who considered restitution as a part of repentance, and humility as an evidence of faith, from those two sanguine reports which are now so frequently issuing from the press, of criminals brought to execution for violating all the laws of God and man!

The Gospel presents us but with one such instance; an
instance which is too often pressed into a service where it has nothing to do; yet we far more frequently see the example of the penitent thief on the cross, brought forward as an encouragement to those who have been notorious offenders, than that of Onesimus; though the latter is of general application, and the former is inapplicable to criminals in a Christian country; for the dying malefactor embraced Christianity the moment it was presented to him. This solitary instance, however, no more offers a justification than an example of fanatical fervors; for if it exhibits a lively faith, it exhibits also deep penitence, humility, and self-condemnation. Nor does the just confidence of the expiring criminal in the Redeemer's power, swell him into that bloated assurance, of which we hear in some late converts.

For in the tracts to which we allude, we hear not only of one, but of many, holy highwaymen, triumphant malefactors, joyful murderers! True, indeed, it is, that good men on earth rejoice with the angels in heaven, over even one sinner that repenteth. We would hope many of these were penitents; but as there was no space granted, as in the case of Onesimus, to prove their sincerity, we should be glad to see, in these statements, more contrition and less rapture. May not young delinquents be encouraged to go on from crime to crime, feeling themselves secure of heaven at last, when they see, from this incautious charity, that assurance of acceptance, which is so frequently withheld from the close of a life of persevering holiness, granted to the most hardened perpetrators of the most atrocious crime?

As it has been observed, that the baskets of the hawkers have this year abounded in these dangerous, though doubtless well-meant tracts, may not the lower class in general, and our servants in particular, be encouraged to look for a happy termination of life, not so much to the dying bed of the exemplary Christian, as to the annals of the gallows? A few exceptions might be mentioned, honorable to the prudence, as well as to the pity, of the writers of some of these little narratives.
Before the introduction of Christianity, so dark were the notices of a state beyond the grave, that it is no wonder if men were little inclined to give up the pleasures and interest of one world, of which they were in actual possession, for the possibility of another, doubtful at best, and too indistinct for hope, too uncertain for comfort.

If a state of future happiness was believed, or rather guessed at, by a few of those who had not the light of revelation, no nation on earth believed it, no public religion in the world taught it. This single truth, then, firmly established, not only by the preaching of Jesus, but by his actual resurrection from the dead, produced a total revolution in the condition of man. It gave a new impulse to his conduct; infused a new vitality into his existence. Faith became to man an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast. This anchorage enables him to ride out the blackest storms; and though he must still work out his passage, the haven is near, and the deliverance certain, "while he keeps his eye to the star, and his hand to the stern."

The value and importance, then, of this doctrine, seems to have made it an especial object of divine care. Founded on the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, perhaps it may have afforded one reason, why the long-suffering of God permitted Jerusalem to stand near half a century after this last event had taken place. By this delay, not only the inhabitants of that city, but the multitudes who annually resorted thither, could gain full leisure to examine into its truth. Had the destruction followed immediately upon the crime which caused it, occasion might have been furnished to the Rabbies for asserting, that a truth could not now be authenticated, which was buried in the ruins of the city. Nor would the enemies of Jesus have scrupled any subornation to discredit his pretensions, even though at the expense of a doctrine, which involved the happiness of worlds unborn.

Jerusalem, however, survived for a time, and the doctrine of a resurrection was established for ever. And now, had it been a doctrine of any ordinary import, as St. Paul was not writing to persons ignorant of the truths of Chris-
tianity, but to Christian converts, it might have been less his object to propound it dogmatically, than to develope and expand it; being a thing previously known, acknowledged, and received. In writing a letter, when we allude to facts already notorious, we do not think our notices the less acceptable, because we do not repeat intelligence already popular; while we content ourselves with drawing inferences from it, making observations upon it, or allusions to it. The reader, having in view the same object with the writer, would catch at intimations, seize on allusions, and fill up the implied meaning.

Such, however, was not St. Paul’s conduct with respect to this doctrine. There were indeed, it should seem, among his converts, many skeptical Jews, infected with the philosophising spirit of the Grecian schools, and who doubted, what these last derided, the resurrection of the dead. Consequently, upon every account, St. Paul is found to give it a peculiar prominence, and on all occasions to bestow upon it more argument and illustration, than on most other tenets of the new faith.

There is no profession, no class of men, whether Jew or Gentile, before whom Paul was not ready to be examined on this subject, and was not prompt to give the most decided testimony. Uniformly he felt the strength of evidence on his side; uniformly he appealed to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, as a fact established on the most solid basis, —a fact, not first propagated in distant countries, where the facility of imposition would have been greater; not at a distant period of time, when the same objection against it might have been made; but on the very spot where it occurred, at the very moment of its occurrence.

In his writings, also, the same confidence, the same urgency appears. He always adverts to this tenet, as to the main hinge on which the whole of Christianity turns. The more reasoning oppugners of the faith thought, that if this doctrine could be got rid of, either by argument or ridicule, it would subvert the whole fabric of Christianity. It was, in reality, the only sensible proof that could be adduced of the immortality of the soul; an opinion which, indeed, many of them professed to entertain, though they would not be indebted to this doctrine for its proof. The more, however, they oppugned, the more he withstood; and of so high importance did he represent it, that he even makes “believing in the heart that God hath raised Jesus from the dead,” to be a principal condition of salvation.

We must not judge of the inspired St. Paul, an apostle
of Jesus Christ, by the same canons of criticism, by which we pronounce judgment on other writers. Notwithstanding the elevation of his genius, his hand was in a great measure held, by the nature of his subject and of his character, from the display of his talents as an author. From the warmth of his feelings, and the energy of his mind, we infer, that he possessed an imagination peculiarly bright. That he subdued, instead of indulging, this faculty, adds worth to his character, dignity to his writing, and confirmation to the truth. To suppress the exercise of a powerful imagination, is one sacrifice more, which a pious writer makes to God. Independently of that inspiration which guided him, his severe judgment would show him, that the topics of which he treated were of too high and holy a nature to admit the indulgence of a faculty rather calculated to excite admiration than to convey instruction.

In considering his general style of composition, we are not to look after the choice of words, so much as to the mind, and spirit, and character of the writer. If, however, we venture to select any one part of St. Paul's writings, to serve as an exception to this remark, and to exhibit a more splendid combination of excellences, than almost any other in his whole works, we should adduce the fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, in which he fully propounds the article in question. As our Lord's discourse, in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, is the only explicit description of the last judgment; and St. John's vision, at the close of the Apocalypse, the only distinct view given us of the heavenly glory; so this is the only graphical representation which Scripture has presented to us of this most important and consolatory doctrine, the resurrection of the dead.

The subject of this fifteenth chapter is quite distinct from that which precedes or follows it; it is interposed between matter quite irrelevant to it, forming a complete episode. As a composition, it stands unrivalled for the unspeakable importance of its matter, its deep reasoning, and lofty imagery. St. Paul sometimes leaves it to others to beat out his massy thoughts into all the expansion of which they are so susceptible. His eloquence, indeed, usually consists more in the grandeur of the sentiment than in the splendor of the language. Here both are equally conspicuous. Here his genius breaks out in its full force: here his mind lights upon a subject which calls out all its powers; and the subject finds a writer worthy of itself. It furnishes a succession of almost every object that is grand in the visible and the invisible world.
description becomes a picture; and expostulation assumes the regularity of a syllogism; an idea takes the form of an image; the writer seems to be the spectator; the relater speaks as one admitted within the veil.

According to his usual practice of appealing to facts, as a substratum on which to build his reasoning, he produces a regular statement, in their order of succession, of the different times at which Jesus appeared after his death, authenticated by the unimpeachable evidence of the disciples themselves, by whom he was seen individually, as well as in great bodies. The evidence he corroborates by his own personal testimony at his conversion; an evidence which he produces with sentiments of the deepest self-abasement.

So important, he proceeds, was it to settle the belief of this doctrine, that, if it were not true, all their hopes fell to the ground. To insist on this grand peculiarity of the Gospel, was establishing the truth of the whole by a part. It was the consummation of the validity of the mission of Christ. Without this finishing circumstance, what proof could his followers adduce, that his atonement was accepted; that his mediation was ascertained; that his intercession would be available; that his final judgment would take place; that because He was risen, they should rise also! It was not one thing, it was every thing. It was putting the seal to a testament, which, without it, would not have been authentic. It involved a whole train of the most awful consequences. Such a chain of inferences would be destroyed by this broken link, as nothing could repair. In short, it amounted to this tremendous conclusion: "Those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished." You who live in the hope of the redemption wrought for you, "are yet in your sins." If Jesus remains under the power of death, how shall we be delivered from the power of sin? If the doctrine be false, then is my preaching a delusion, and your faith a nullity. He adds, that they who were now the happiest of men, in their assured hope of eternal life, would become, "of all men most miserable;" in short, as in another place he asks, to what purpose has Christ died for our sins, if he has not "risen for our justification?"

The apostle having shown himself a consummate master of the art of reasoning, by his refutation of the absurdities that would follow an assumption, that Christ was not risen; and having cleared the ground from most of the objections and difficulties which had been thrown in his way, proceeds to the positive assertion, that not only Christ is risen, but
that all his faithful followers have their own resurrection as-
certained by his. He illustrates this truth by an apposite
allusion to the custom of a Jewish harvest, the whole of
which was sanctified by the consecration of the first-fruits.

In his distinguishing characteristics of the different
properties of the body of man, in its different states of ex-
istence, every antithesis is exact. The body that is sown
in corruption, dishonor, and weakness, is raised in incor-
ruption, glory, and power. The material body is become
spiritual. "The first man was made a living soul," pos-
sessing that natural life communicated by him to all his
posterity; but Christ was a quickening spirit, through
whom, as from its source, spiritual life is conveyed to all
believers.

If Paul uniformly makes every doctrine a fountain flow-
ing with practical uses, it is no wonder that he should make
this triumphant consummation of all doctrine subservient
to the great ends of holiness. For it is worthy of remark,
that in this very place, with all the interest which his ar-
gument excites, in all the heat which his defence kindles,
carried away, as he seems to be, by his faith and his feel-
ings,—yet, in his usual manner, he checks his career to
introduce moral maxims, to insinuate holy cautions. Not
contented to guard the people against the danger of cor-
rupt and corrupting society upon his own principles, he
strengthens his argument by referring them to a Pagan
poet, whose authority, with some at least, he might think
would be more respected than his own, on the infection of
"evil communications." He suggests ironically, as a
practical effect of the disbelief of this truth, the propriety
of epicurean voluptuousness, and even ventures to recom-
mand the utmost indulgence of a present enjoyment, upon
the supposition of a death which is to cut off all future
hope, and all posthumous responsibility.

Then assuming a loftier note, with an awfully warning
voice, he proceeds to this solemn adjuration—"Awake to
righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the know-
ledge of God." As if he had said,—If you give into this
incredulity, your practice will become consonant to your
belief. Every man will defend his error when it favors his
vice. Your evil habits will complete the corruption of
your faith. If you find an interest in indulging your mis-
take, your next step will be to think it true. What is first a
wish, will gradually become an opinion; an opinion will as
naturally become a ground of action; and what you now per-
mit yourself to do, you will soon become willing to justify.
He produces, as the strongest proof of his belief in the doctrine in question, the complacency of Christians in suffering. Why did others press forward to martyrdom?—Why did he himself expose his life to perpetual peril? Why, but from the firm persuasion, that as Christ was risen, they should rise also. Would not their voluntary trials be absurd? Would it not be madness to embrace, when it was in their power to avoid, all the hardships which imbit-
tered life, all the dangers which were likely to shorten it. He and his colleagues were not impassable substances, but feeling men, sensible to pain, keenly alive to suffering, with nerves as finely strung, with bodies as tenderly con-
stituted, with souls as reluctant to misery, as others. Take away this grand motive for patience, rob them of this sus-
taining confidence, strip them of this glorious prospect, and their zeal would lose its character of virtue, their piety its claim to wisdom. Their perseverance would be fatuity. Mighty then must be their motive, powerful indeed their as-
urance, clear and strong their conviction, that their brief sorrows were not worthy to be compared with the glories which were insured to them by the resurrection of Christ.

Again, he resumes the task of repelling the more plaus-
sible objections. But it is not our business to follow him through all his variety of illustration, all his diversified analogy, all his consecutive reasoning on the nature of the resurrection of the body. Resemblances the most distant, substances the most seemingly dissimilar in themselves, are yet brought together by a skill the most consummate, by an aptness the most convincing. All the objects of our senses, whatever is familiar to the sight, or habitual to the mind, are put in requisition—all the analogies of nature are ransacked—the vegetable, the animal, the terrestrial and the celestial world, are brought into comparison; and the whole is made to demonstrate the truth of this awful doctrine. Such a cluster of images, all bearing upon one point, at once fill the mind, dilate the conception, and con-
firm the faith.

There is singular wisdom in the selection of these illu-
trations, not only as being the most apposite, but the most intelligible.—They are not drawn from things abstruse or recondite, but from objects with which all classes are equally acquainted. An incidental, but not unimportant proof of the universal design of Christianity. The most ordinary man is as conversant with the springing up and growth of corn, with the distinction between the flesh of the different animal species, as the philosopher. He can also as clearly
discern the exterior distinction between the different luminaries of heaven, as the astronomer. Here is no demand of knowledge, no appeal to science. Sight is the witness, sense the arbiter in this question.

To bestow immortality on mortals, and to revive the dead, had been pronounced by a heathen author to be beyond the reach of divine power. To this bold Pyrrhonist therefore, who might be among the Corinthians, and who sought to perplex the argument by asking—"how are the dead raised up?—With what body do they come?"—he answers peremptorily, by referring them to the great resolver of difficulties—the power of God, inscribed in the book of daily experience—God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him. He reminds them, that this divine power they perpetually saw exercised in a wonderful manner in the revolution of seasons in the resuscitation of plants apparently dead; and in the springing up of corn, which dies first, in order that it may live. To that Omnipotence which could accomplish the one, could the other be difficult?

Who can pursue without emotion his rapid yet orderly transition from one portion of his subject to another? The interest still rising till it closes in the triumphant climax of the final victory over the two last enemies, death and the grave! At length by a road, in which deviation does not impede his progress, he reaches the grand consummation. Behold I show you a mystery—we shall not all sleep—but we shall be changed—in a moment—in the twinkling of an eye—at the last trumpet—for the trumpet shall sound—and the dead shall be raised incorruptible—and we shall all be changed. It is almost profane to talk of beauties, where the theme is so transcendent; but this is one of the rare instances in which amplification adds to spirit, and velocity is not retarded by repetition. The rhythm adds to the effect, and soothes the mind, while the sentiment elevates it. The idea was not newly conceived in the apostle's mind; he had told the Thessalonians "the Lord himself shall descend with a shout, with the voice of an Archangel, and the trump of God." His grateful spirit does not forget to remind them to whom the victory is owing, to whom the thanks are due.

In the solemn close, alighting again from the world of light, and life, and glory, he just touches upon earth to drop another brief; but most impressive lesson—that though the victory is obtained, though the last conquest is achieved, though Christ is actually risen—all these ends accomplished, are not to dismiss us from diligence, but to stimulate
us to it. They furnish only an additional argument for "abounding in the work of the Lord." It adds animation to the motive, that from this full exposition of the doctrine, they not only believe, but they know, that their labor is not in vain in the Lord.

With this glorious hope what should arrest their progress? With such a reward in view—eternal life, the purchase of their risen Saviour, he at once provides them with the most effectual spur to diligence, with the only powerful support under the sorrows of life, with the only infallible antidote against the fear of death.

To conclude, this blessed apostle never fails, where the subject is susceptible of consolation as well as of instruction, to deduce both from the same premises. What affectionate Christian will not here revert, with grateful joy, to the same writer's cheering address to the saints of another church, who might labor under the pressing affliction of the death of pious friends?* He there offers a new instance, not only of his never-failing rule of applying the truth he preaches, but of their immediate application to the feelings of the individual. This it is which renders his writings so personally interesting. That the mourner over the pious dead might not "sorrow as those who have no hope," after the declaration that "Jesus died and rose again." He builds on this general principle, the particular assurance, "Even them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

What a balm to the breaking heart!—What! the loved companion of our youth, the friend of our age, the solace of our life, with whom we took sweet counsel, with whom we went to the house of God as friends, will Christ bring with him? Shall the bliss of our suspended intercourse be restored, unalloyed by the mutual infirmities which here rendered it imperfect, undiminished by the dread of another separation?

Well then might the angel say to Mary at the forsaken tomb, "Woman, why weepest thou?" Well might Jesus himself repeat the question, "Woman, why weepest thou?" Tears are wiped from all eyes. "The voice of joy and thanksgiving is in the tabernacles of the righteous." "The right hand of the Lord bringeth mighty things to pass." The resurrection of Christians is indissolubly involved in that of Christ: "because I live, ye shall live also." What are the splendid triumphs of earthly heroes, to his triumph over the grave? What are the most signal victory over a world of enemies, to his victory over his last enemy?

* 1 Thessalonians, iv. 14
"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

CHAP. XIX.


Prayer is an act which seems to be so prepared in the frame of our nature; to be so congenial to our dependent condition, so suited to our exigencies, so adapted to every man's known wants, and to his possibilities of wants unknown; so full of relief to the soul, and of peace to the mind, and of gladness to the heart; so productive of confidence in God, and so reciprocally proceeding from that confidence, that we should think, if we did not know the contrary, that it is a duty which scarcely required to be enjoined; that he who had once found out his necessities, and that there was no other redress for them, would spontaneously have recourse as a delight, to what he had neglected as a command; that he who had once tasted the bounties of God, would think it a hardship not to be allowed to thank him for them; that the invitation to pray to his Benefactor, was an additional proof of Divine goodness; that to be allowed to praise him for his mercies, was itself a mercy.

The apostle's precept, "pray always,"—pray evermore, pray without ceasing, men ought always to pray,—will not be criticised as a pleonasm, if we call to remembrance that there is no state of mind, no condition of life, in which prayer is not a necessity as well as an obligation. In danger, fear impels to it; in trouble, we have no other resource; in sickness, we have no other refuge; in dejection, no other hope; in death, no other comfort.

St. Paul frequently shows the word prayer to be a term of great latitude, involving the whole compass of our intercourse with God. He represents it to include our adoration of his perfections, our acknowledgment of the wisdom of his dispensations, of our obligation for his benefits, providential and spiritual; of the avowal of our entire dependence on him, of our absolute subjection to him, the declaration of our faith in him, the expression of our devotedness
to him; the confession of our own unworthiness, infirmities, and sins; the petition for the supply of our wants, and for the pardon of our offences; for succor in our distress; for a blessing on our undertakings; for the direction of our conduct, and the success of our affairs.

If any should be disposed to think this general view too comprehensive, let him point out which of these particulars prayer does not embrace; which of these clauses, a rational, a sentient, an enlightened, a dependent being can omit in his scheme of devotion.

But as the multifarious concerns of human life will necessarily occasion a suspension of the exercise; St. Paul, ever attentive to the principle of the act, and to the circumstances of the actor, reduces all these qualities to their essence, when he resolves them into the spirit of supplication.

To pray incessantly, therefore, appears to be, in his view of the subject, to keep the mind in an habitual disposition and propensity to devotion; for there is a sense in which we may be said to do that which we are willing to do, though there are intervals of thought, as well as intermissions of the act. "As a traveller," says Dr. Barrow, "may be said to be still on his journey, though he stops to take needful rest, and to transact necessary business." If he pause, he does not turn out of the way; his pursuit is not diverted, though occasionally interrupted.

Constantly maintaining the disposition, then, and never neglecting the actual duty; never slighting the occasion which presents itself, nor violating the habit of stated devotion, may, we presume, be called "to pray without ceasing." The expression "watching unto prayer," implies this vigilance in finding, and this zeal in laying hold on these occasions.

The success of prayer, though promised to all, who offer it in perfect sincerity, is not so frequently promised to the cry of distress, to the impulse of fear, or the emergency of the moment, as to humble continuance in devotion. It is to patient waiting, to assiduous solicitation, to unwearied importunity, that God has declared that he will lend his ear, that he will give the communication of his Spirit, that he will grant the return of our requests. Nothing but this holy perseverance can keep up in our minds an humble sense of our dependence. It is not by a mere casual petition, however passionate, but by habitual application, that devout affections are excited and maintained; that our converse with heaven is carried on. It is by no other means that we can be assured, with St. Paul, that "we are risen
with Christ," but this obvious one, that we thus seek the
things which are above; that the heart is renovated; that
the mind is lifted above this low scene of things; that the
spirit breathes in a purer atmosphere; that the whole man
is enlightened, and strengthened, and purified; and that the
more frequently, so the more nearly, he approaches to the
throne of God. He will find also, that prayer not only
expresses, but elicits the divine grace.

Yet do we not allow every idle plea, every frivolous pre-
tense, to divert us from our better resolves? Business brings
in its grave apology; pleasure its bewitching excuse. But
if we would examine our hearts truly, and report them faith-
fully, we should find the fact to be, that disinclination to
this employment, oftener than our engagement in any other,
keeps us from this sacred intercourse with our Maker.

Under circumstances of distress, indeed, prayer is adopt-
ed with comparatively little reluctance: the mind, which
knows not where to fly, flies to God. In agony, nature is
no atheist. The soul is drawn to God by a sort of natural
impulse; not always, perhaps, by an emotion of piety; but
from a feeling conviction, that every other refuge is "a
refuge of lies." Oh! thou afflicted, tossed with tempests,
and not comforted, happy if thou art either drawn or driven,
with holy David, to say to thy God, "Thou art a place to
hide me in."

But if it is easy for the sorrowing heart to give up a
world, by whom itself seems to be given up, there are
other demands for prayer equally imperative. There are
circumstances more dangerous, yet less suspected of danger,
in which, though the call is louder, it is less heard; because
the voice of conscience is drowned by the clamors of the
world. Prosperous fortunes, unbroken health, flattering
friends, buoyant spirits, a spring-tide of success—these are
the occasions when the very abundance of God's mercies
is apt to fill the heart till it hardens it. Loaded with riches,
crowned with dignities, successful in enterprise; beset with
snares in the shape of honors, with perils under the mask
of pleasures; then it is, that to the already saturated heart,
"to-morrow shall be as this day, and more abundant," is
more in unison than "what shall I render to the Lord."

Men of business, especially men in power and public
situations, are in no little danger of persuading themselves,
that the affairs which occupy their time and mind, being,
as they really are, great and important duties, exonerate
those who perform them from the necessity of the same
strictness in devotion, which they allow to be right for men
of leisure; and which, when they become men of leisure themselves, they are resolved to adopt;—but now is the accepted time, here is the accepted place, however they may be tempted to think that an exact attention to public duty, and an unimpeachable rectitude in discharging it, is itself a substitute for the offices of piety.

But these great and honorable persons are the very men to whom superior cares, and loftier duties, and higher responsibilities, render prayer even more necessary, were it possible, than to others. Nor does this duty trench upon other duties, for the compatibilities of prayer are universal. It is an exercise which has the property of incorporating itself with every other; not only not impeding, but advancing it. If secular thoughts, and vain imaginations, often break in on our devout employments, let us allow religion to vindicate her rights, by uniting herself with our worldly occupations. There is no crevice so small at which devotion may not slip in: no other instance of so rich a blessing being annexed to so easy a condition; no other case in which there is any certainty, that to ask is to have. This the suitors to the great do not always find so easy from them, as the great themselves find from God.

Not only the elevation on which they stand makes this fence necessary for their personal security, by enabling them to bear the height without giddiness, but the guidance of God’s hand is so essential to the operations they conduct, that the public prosperity, no less than their own safety, is involved in the practice of habitual prayer. God will be more likely to bless the hand which steers, and the head which directs, when both are ruled by the heart which prays. Happily we need not look out of our own age or nation for instances of public men, who, while they govern the country, are themselves governed by a religious principle: who petition the Almighty for direction, and praise him for success.

The duty which Paul enjoins—"praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereto with all perseverance,"—would be the surest means to augment our love to God. We gradually cease to love a benefactor of whom we cease to think. The frequent recollection would warm our affections, and we should more cordially devote our lives to him to whom we should more frequently consecrate our hearts. The apostle therefore inculcates prayer, not only as an act, but as a frame of mind.

In all his writings effectual prayer uniformly supposes
accompanying preparatory virtue. Prayer draws all the Christian graces into its focus. It draws charity, followed by her lovely train—of forbearance with faults; forgiveness of injuries, pity for errors, and relieving of wants. It draws repentance, with her holy sorrows, her pious resolutions, her self-distrust. It attracts faith, with her elevated eye—hope, with her grasped anchor—beneficence, with her open hand—zeal, looking far and wide to serve—humility with introverted eye, looking at home. Prayer, by quickening these graces in the heart, warms them into life, fits them for service, and dismisses each to its appropriate practice. Prayer is mental virtue; virtue is spiritual action. The mould into which genuine prayer casts the soul, is not effaced by the suspension of the act, but retains some touches of the impression till the act is repeated.

Prayer, divested of the love of God, will obtain nothing, because it asks nothing cordially. It is only the interior sentiment that gives life and spirit to devotion. To those who possess this, prayer is not only a support, but a solace: to those who want it, it is not only an insipid task, but a religious penalty. Our apostle every where shows that purity of heart, resignation of spirit, peace and joy in believing, can by no other expedient, be maintained in life, activity, and vigor. Prayer so circumstanced is the appointed means for drawing down the blessing we solicit, and the pardon we need.

Yet that the best things are liable to abuse, is a complaint echoed by all writers of ethics. Certain mystics, pretending to extraordinary illumination, have converted this holy exercise into a presumptuous error. Intense meditation itself has been turned into an instrument of spiritual pride, and led the mistaken recluse to overlook the appointed means of instruction; to reject the scriptures, to abandon the service of the sanctuary, and to expect to be snatched, like holy Paul, up to the third heaven, deserting those prescribed and legitimate methods which would more surely have conducted him thither. The history of the apostle himself presents a striking lesson in this case. "Let us remember," says one of the fathers, "that though Paul was miraculously converted by an immediate vision from heaven, he was nevertheless sent for baptism and instruction to a man."

Holy Paul calls upon us to meditate on the multitude and the magnitude of the gifts of God. When we consider how profusely he bestows and how little he requires;
that while he confers like deity, he desires only such poor returns as can be made by indigent, mendicant mortality; that he requires no costly oblation; nothing that will impoverish, but, on the contrary, will inconceivably enrich the giver. When we consider this, we are ready to wonder that he will accept so poor a thing as impotent gratitude for immeasurable bounty. When we reflect, that our very desire to praise him is his gift—that his grace must purify the offering, before he condescends to receive it, must confer it on that spirit which renders it acceptable—that he only expects we should consecrate to him, what we have received from him,—that we should only confess, that of all we enjoy, nothing is our due—we may well blush at our insensibility.

We think, perhaps, as we have observed in another place, had he commanded us to "do some great thing," to raise some monument of splendor, some memorial of notoriety and ostentation, something that would perpetuate our own name with his goodness, we should gladly have done it. How much more when he only requires,

Our thanks, how due!

When he only asks the homage of the heart, the expression of our dependence, the recognition of his right!

Concerning the duty of intercessory prayer for those we love, the apostle has bequeathed us a high and holy example. He has given us not only injunctions, but specimens. Observe for what it is that "he bows his knees to God" in behalf of his friends. Is it for an increase of their wealth, their power, their fame, or any other external prosperity? No: it is that "God would grant them according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might in the inner man:"—it is that "Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith;"—it is "that they may be rooted and grounded in love," and this to a glorious end—"that they may be able, with all saints, to comprehend " the vast dimensions of the love of Christ;—that "they may be filled with all the fulness of God." These are the sort of petitions which we need never hesitate to present. These are requests which we may rest assured are always agreeable to the divine will; here we are certain we cannot "pray amiss." These are intercessions of which the benefit may be felt, when wealth, and fame, and power shall be forgotten things.

Why does Paul "pray day and night that he might see the face of his Thessalonian converts?" Not merely that he might have the gratification of once more beholding
those he loved—though that would sensibly delight so affectionate a heart—but "that he might perfect that which was lacking in their faith."

Here is an instance of a spirit so large in its affections, so high in their object; of a man who had so much of heaven in his friendships, so much of soul in his attachments, that he thought time too brief, earth too scanty, worldly blessings too low, to enter deeply into his petitions for those to whom time and earth, the transitory blessings of life, and life itself, would so soon be no more.

In exciting us to perpetual gratitude, St. Paul stirs us up to the duty of keeping before our eyes the mercies which so peremptorily demand it. These mercies succeed each other so rapidly, or rather, are crowded upon us so simultaneously, that if we do not count them as they are received, and record them as they are enjoyed, their very multitude, which ought to penetrate the heart more deeply, will cause them to slip out of the memory.

The apostle acknowledges the gratitude due to God to arise from his being the universal proprietor,—whose I am, and whom I serve; thus making the obedience to grow out of the dependence. He serves his Maker because he is his property. We should reflect on the superiority of the bounties of our heavenly Father, over those of our earthly friends, not only in their number and quality, but especially in their unremitting constancy. The dearest friends only think of us occasionally, nor can we be so unreasonable as to expect to be the constant object of their attention. If they assist us under the immediate pressure of distress, their cares are afterwards remitted.

Many, besides us, have a claim upon their kindness, and they could not invariably attend to us without being unjust to others. If a man were to lay out his whole stock of affection upon one individual, how many duties must he neglect, how many claims must he slight, how much injustice must he commit, of how much ingratitude would he be guilty! And as an earthly friend cannot divide his benefits, or even the common acts of kindness among an indefinite number, and as human means have limits, so his benevolence can generally be little more than good will. But the exhaustless fund of infinite love can never be diminished;—though the distribution is universal, though the diffusion is as wide as his rational creation, though the continuance is as durable as his own eternity, the beneficence of almighty power needs not, like his creatures, deduct from one, because it is liberal to another.
Our kindest friend may not always know our secret sorrows, and with the utmost goodness of intention cannot apply a balsam, where he does not know there is a wound; or it may be a wound deeper than human skill can reach, or human kindness cure. Again, our weaknesses may often weary, and sometimes disgust, even an attached friend; but it is the feeling of these very infirmities with which our divine High Priest is so tenderly touched. His compassion arises from a deep and intimate sense of sympathy—for he was in all points tempted like as we are, yet in no point did he sin.

It is in this view that we become so personally interested in the attributes of God; that they come in so completely in aid of our necessities, and to the supply of our comforts. As his omniscience brings him fully acquainted with all our wants, and his omnipotence enables him to relieve them; so his immortality is pledged for ours, and ensures to us the perpetuity of our blessings. What a glorious idea, that the attributes of the self-dependent and everlasting God are laid out in the service of his children!

But the apostle, not contented with the double injunctions,—pray evermore; in every thing give thanks,—links to it a most exhilarating duty—rejoice for evermore. This single exhortation—rejoice in the Lord—is not sufficient, it is reiterated without limit, again I say rejoice! But what are the chief causes of Paul's joy?—"that God hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,"—"that he hath delivered us from the powers of darkness,"—"that he hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son"—that we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." What is "his hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing!"—that he should meet his converts in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming.

But this blessed saint found surprising subjects of joy, subjects with which a stranger does not desire to intermeddle. To rejoice in tribulation; to take joyfully the spoiling of his goods; to rejoice in the sufferings of his friends; to rejoice that he was counted worthy to suffer for the sake of Christ. This is, indeed, a species of joy which the world does not desire to take from him, nor to share with him. In the close of the description of his way of life, of which temptation, and trial, and sorrow, and sufferings, are the gradations, the climax is commonly not merely resignation, but triumph; not submission only, but joy.

It is worth our observation, that by perseverance in prayer
he was enabled to glory in the infirmity which he had thrice besought the Lord might depart from him. And it is a most impressive part of his character, that he never gloriied in "those visions and revelations of the Lord," but in the infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions for Christ's sake, which were graciously sent to counteract any elevation of heart, which such extraordinary distinctions might have occasioned. Like his blessed Lord, he disclosed all the circumstances of his degradation to the eye of the world, and concealed only those of his glory.

The same spirit of Christian generosity which directed his petitions, influenced also his thanksgivings for his friends. What are the subjects for which he praises God on their behalf?—not that they are enriched or exalted, but "that their faith growth exceedingly." Again to the Philippians, "holding forth the word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain.

But the apostle endeavors most especially to kindle our grateful joy for the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; a blessing which, though thrown open to the acceptance of all on the offered terms, is to every believer distinctly personal. He endeavors to excite our praises for every instance of faith and holiness recorded in Scripture. He teaches us, that whatsoever was written aforetime, was written for our instruction. The humble believer may claim his share—for in this case appropriation is not monopoly—of every doctrine, of every precept, of every promise, of every example. The Christian may exultingly say, the Holy Scriptures were written for my reproof, for my correction, for my instruction in righteousness. The Holy Spirit, who teaches me to apply it to myself, dictated it for me. Not a miracle upon record, not an instance of trust in God, not a pattern of obedience to Him, not a gratulation of David, not a prophecy of Isaiah, not an office of Christ, not a doctrine of an evangelist, not an exhortation of an apostle, not a consolation of St. Paul, but has its immediate application to my wants; but makes a distinct call on my gratitude; but furnishes a personal demand upon my responsibility. The whole record of the sacred canon is but a record of the special mercies of God to me, and of his promises to myself, and to every individual Christian to the end of the world.

That divine spirit, which dictated the inspired volume, has taken care that we should never be at a loss for materials for devotion. Not a prophet or apostle but has more or
less contributed to the sacred fund, but has cast his mite into the treasury. The writings of St. Paul, especially, are rich in petitions, abundant in thanksgivings, overflowing in praises. The Psalms of David have enlarged the medium of intercourse between earth and heaven. They have supplied to all ages materials for Christian worship, under every supposable circumstance of human life. They have facilitated the means of negotiation for the penitent, and of gratitude for the pardoned. They have provided confession for the contrite, consolation for the broken hearted, invitation to the weary, and rest for the heavy laden. They have furnished petitions for the needy, praise for the grateful, and adoration for all. However indigent in himself, no one can complain of want, who has access to such a magazine of intellectual and spiritual treasure. These variously gifted compositions, not only kindle the devoutest feeling, but suggest the aptest expressions: they invest the sublimest meanings with the noblest eloquence. They have taught the tongue of the stammerer to speak plainly; they have furnished him who was ready to perish for the lack of knowledge, with principles as well as feelings; they have provided the illiterate with the form, and the devout with the spirit of prayer. To him who previously felt not his wants, they have imparted fervent desires, they have inspired the faint with energy, and the naturally dead, with spiritual life.

The writings and the practice of St. Paul do not less abundantly, than the compositions of David, manifest the supreme power of fervent devotion. The whole tenor of his life proves that his heart was habitually engaged in intercourse with the Father of spirits. His conversation, like the face of Moses, betrays, by its brightness, that he had familiar admission to the presence of God. He exhibits the noblest instance, with which the world has presented us, of this peculiar effect of vital religion: that supplication is the dialect of the poor in spirit, thanksgiving the idiom of the genuine Christian, praise his vernacular tongue.
The highest state of moral goodness is compounded of the avowed properties of ripened habits, growing out of genuine Christian principles, invigorated and confirmed by the energy of the Holy Spirit:—this is evangelical virtue.

St. Paul contrasts the power of opposite habits with wonderful force in his two pictures, one of the debasing slavery of a vicious mind, and the other of the almost mechanical power of superinduced good habits in a virtuous one:—"Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"* What a dominion must holy principles and holy habits have obtained in that mind, when he could say, "The life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me,"—"I am crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to me!" Mere morality never rose to this superhuman triumph, never exhibited such a proof of its own power to establish Christian practice. To these rooted habits the sacred writers sometimes apply the term perfection.

St. Paul, when he speaks of perfection, could only mean that fixedness of principle, and Christian elevation of character, which, under the influence of Divine grace, is actually attainable; he could not mean to intimate that he expected man to be freed from liability to error, to be completely exempted from the inroads of passion, to be no longer obnoxious to deviations and deflections from the law, by which he is yet mainly guided and governed. He could not expect him to be entirely and absolutely delivered from the infirmities of his frail and fallen nature. But though this general uniformity of good habits may occasionally, through the surprise of passion and the assaults of temptation, be in some degree broken, yet these invaders are not encouraged, but repelled: though some actions may be more imperfect, and some wrong tempers may still unhappily intrude themselves, yet vigilance and prayer obtain such a power of resistance, as finally almost to subdue these corruptions; and those that are not altogether conquered, but occasionally break out, induce a habit of

* Romans, ch. vi.
watchfulness over the suspected places, and keep the heart humble, by a feeling of these remains of infirmity.

But even here, such are the stratagems of the human heart for concealing its corruptions, not only from others, but from itself, that it is incumbent on every individual so to examine, as clearly to discover, his own real character; to inquire, whether he is at the same time sincerely mourning over his remaining disorders, and earnestly desiring and diligently cultivating a new vital principle of faith and holiness; or whether he has only been making a certain degree of improvement in this or that particular quality, while he continues both destitute and undesirous of this vital principle, which is the first seed of the divine life.

It should seem, that the term "perfect," as well in other parts of Scripture as in the writings of St. Paul, not only has not always the exact meaning which we assign to it, but has different meanings, according to the occasion on which it is employed. Sometimes this term expresses the aim rather than the acquisition, as in that injunction of our Saviour—"Be ye perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect." Sometimes it appears to imply, being furnished with needful instruction in all points, as in Paul's direction to Timothy,—"that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Often it means nearly the same with religious sincerity, as in Proverbs,—"for the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it." Sometimes it is used with a special reference to abhorrence of idolatry, as when the expression "perfect heart" is applied to various kings of Judah. The meaning in Philippians, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded," seems to import only real earnestness. Perfection, in the precise notion of it, admits not of gradation, nor of advancement in the same quality.

The highest kind of perfection of which man is capable, is to "love God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, with all his heart;" that is, so to love as to obey the laws of the one, while he rests on the merits of the other. Paul intimates that our happiness consists in the pardon of our sins, and our holiness in our conquest over them; and perhaps there is not a more dangerous delusion, than to separate the forgiveness from the subjugation: the pardon, indeed, is absolute, the conquest comparative. He places attainable perfection in the obedience of faith, in the labors of charity, in the purity of holiness; proving that to aspire after this perfection, all men, according to their respective advantages, are under equal obligation; and it is not too
much to assert, that no one lives up to the dignity of man, who does not habitually aspire to the perfection of a Christian. For to come as near to God, that is, as near to perfection, as our nature was intended to approach, is but to answer the end for which we were sent into the world.—And do we not defeat that end, while we are not only contented to live so much below our acknowledged standard, but while we rest satisfied, without even aspiring towards it?

While Paul strenuously endeavors to abate confidence, and beat down presumption, he is equally careful, not by lowering the tone of perfection, to foster negligence, or to cherish indolence. He speaks as one who knew that sloth is an enemy, the more dangerous for being insidiously quiet. It saps the principle as effectually, if not as expeditiously, as other vices storm it. It is, indeed, in the power of this one inert sin, to perform the worst work of all the active ones—to destroy the soul. He admonishes us equally, by his writings and by his example, to carry all the liveliness of our feelings, and the vigor of our faculties, into our religion. He knew that a cold indifference, that a lifeless profession, would ill prepare us for that vital world, that real land of the living, that immortality which is all life, and soul, and spirit. He therefore prescribes for us patients, who need to be stimulated, full as often as to be lowered, in our moral temperature; nay, whose general constitution of mind presents a large portion of languor to be invigorated, and of lethargy to be animated. "A physician," says bishop Jeremy Taylor, "would have small employment on the Riphæan mountains, if he could cure nothing but calentures; dead palsies and consumptions are their diseases."

The apostle, however, intimates frequently, that perfection does not consist in a higher heroic elevation in some particular point, which, as few could reach, so fewer would aim at it; but in a steady principle, an equable piety, a consistent practice, an unremitting progress. If the standard held up were singular, it would be unprofitable. An exhibition of character rather to be wondered at, than imitated, would be a useless perfection. A prodigy is not a model. It would be no duty to copy a miracle, but presumptuous to expect that a miracle would be wrought for us. To call on all to "perfect holiness in the fear of God"—to exhort men to "go unto perfection," would be mocking human infirmity, if the apostle meant something which only a very few could attain.—"Pressing on unto perfec-
tion," can mean little more than a perpetual improvement in piety and virtue.

Let us then be animated and encouraged by Scripture instances of excellence, and not deterred by them, as if they were too sublime for our imitation, as if exalted piety were to be limited to a few peculiar favorites of Heaven, were the exclusive prerogative of some distinguished servants of God, the rare effect of some miraculous gift. All grace is indeed a miracle, but it is not a singular, it is not an exclusive miracle. Whole churches, with exceptions no doubt, have been favored with it. St. Paul speaks of large communities, not universally, we presume, but generally, touched by divine grace, so as collectively to become "the joy and crown of his rejoicing." Hear him declare of his Roman converts, that they "were full of all goodness, filled with all knowledge;" of the Corinthians—that they "were enriched in every thing—that they abounded in all faith and diligence:" mark the connection of these two attributes; "faith" in one, nor in another, is not the slackener of duty, but in all the principle and spring of the same "diligence." These high commendations are not limited to Apollos, his associate in the ministry, nor to "Timothy, his dearly beloved son;" nor to Titus, his "own son after the common faith," nor to any other of those distinguished saints "who labored with him in the Gospel."

We may therefore fairly consider St. Paul, not as an instructor nor as a model, exclusively for martyrs, and ministers, and missionaries. As the instruction of Christ's sermon on the mount, though primarily addressed to his disciples, was by no means restricted to them; so the exhortations of Paul are not confined to ecclesiastical teachers, though he had them much in view. The inclosure lies open to all; the entrance is left free; the possibility of salvation is universal, the invitation is as large as the benevolence of God, the persons invited as numerous as his whole rational creation.

It is a beautiful part of his character, and it is what contributes to make him so uniformly a pattern, that all his strength is not reserved for, nor expended entirely on, those great demands which so frequently occurred, to answer which he was always so fully prepared, and which he encountered with such unshaken fortitude.

His intervals were filled up with shades of the same color: the same principle was set at work in all the common events of his daily life: the same dispositions which were ripening him for his final suffering, operated in the humble,
tender, forbearing habits, in which he was perpetually exercised. The divine principle had resolved itself into a settled frame of mind. And it was in the hourly cultivation of that most amiable branch of it, Christian charity, that he acquired such maturity in the heroic virtue of enduring patience. To deny his own inclinations, to sustain the infirmities of the weak, to bear the burden of others, he considered as indispensable in the followers of Him, whose lovely characteristic it was, that He pleased not himself. In enjoining this temper on his Roman converts, he winds up his injunction, with ascribing to the Almighty the two attributes which render Him the fountain of grace, for the production of this very temper in all alike who call upon Him for it. He denominates Him the God of patience and consolation.

We must not therefore fancy that this eminent saint was not an example to private life, because his destination was higher, and his trials greater than ours. This superiority cannot disqualify him for a copy. We must aim at the highest point. It is easier to reduce a portrait than enlarge it. All may have the same grace; and some actually have great, if not equal trials. If Christians are not now called like him, to martyrdom, they are frequently called to bear the long protracted sufferings of sickness without mitigation, of penury without relief, of sorrows without redress. Some are called to bear them all, without even the comfort of witnesses, without the soothes of pity.

If the elevation of his conduct does not place this great apostle above our imitation, no more does the sublimity of his principles, as we find them exhibited in his writings. His piety in both is equally of a practical nature. We rise from perusing many a treatise of metaphysical morality, without clearly ascertaining its precise object; at least, without carrying away any one specific principle for the regulation of our own heart and life. We admire the ingenuity of the work, as we admire the contrivance of a labyrinth; it is curiously devised; but its intricacy, while it has amused, has embarrassed us. We feel that we might have made our way, and attained our end, more easily and more speedily, in a plain path, where less perplexity required no artificial clue. The direct morality of our apostle has none of this Dedalian enginery.

St. Paul, in one sense, always writes like a man of the actual world. His is not a religion of theory, but of facts, of feelings, of principles; a religion exactly accommodated to the being for whom he prescribes. Our passions and
our reason, our hopes and our fears, our infirmities and our supports, our lapse and our restoration, all find their place in his discussions. He consults every part of our nature; he writes for material and immaterial, for mortal and immortal man.

He does not abound in those desultory and random discussions, which distract the mind, and leave the reader at a loss what he is to think and what he is to do. He does not philosophize upon abstract truths, nor reason upon conjectural notions; but bears witness to what he has seen and known, and deduces practical instruction from actual events. He is therefore distinct in his exposition of doctrines and duties; explicit in his injunctions and reproofs; and this because truth is absolute. We can scarcely peruse a sentence in his writings, without finding something to bring away from them for our own use, something which belongs to ourselves, something which would have been seasonably addressed to us, had he been our personal correspondent.

He knew mankind too well, not to know the necessity of speaking out: he knew, that if any opening was left, they would interpret it in their own favor; that they would slip out of every thing which was not precisely explained and definitely enjoined. He was aware that the reason why men profit so little by Scripture instruction is because, in applying it, they are disposed to think only of other people, and are apt to forget themselves. He knew it was not easy to lower the world's good opinion of itself. That the quicksightedness of certain persons, errors, not in misunderstanding the justness of a reproof, but only in mistaking its object; and that, by directing the censure to others, they turn away the point of the weapon from their own bosoms. Yet he makes charitable allowance for the capacities, the exigencies, and the temptations of a world so diversely circumstanced. Like his blessed Master, he would have all men every where to be saved; and, like him, left no means unessay'd, which might promote this great end.

We must not imagine that Christianity is not precisely the same thing now, as it was when our apostle published it, because its external marks are not so completely identified. A more animated zeal in religion might have been visible and legitimate in the first ages of the Church, than commonly in the present. The astonishing change then effected in the minds of men, was rapid, and often instantaneous. In our day, it is usually gradual. It is no won-
der that persons should have been overwhelmed with joy and gratitude, at being suddenly rescued from the darkness of Pagan idolatry, at being delivered from the bondage of the Jewish ritual, and translated into the glorious liberty of the children of God. The total revolution in the mind, and in the principles, would certainly produce a sensible alteration in the external habits and visible practice of the Gentile convert; whose morals, if he were indeed a convert, would be as different from what they had previously been, as his faith; and he as different from his former self, as any two men from each other. This, consequently, would make the change more obvious than in the renovat-ed character of a nominal Christian, now brought to embrace vital Christianity; in whose outward observances, antecedent and subsequent to his change, there might probably be no very apparent alteration.

In the days of the apostle, the holy sacrament of baptism was likely to be, in the very highest sense of the word, regeneration. It was not only the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace; but it was also, for the most part, an actual evidence that such grace had been effectually received unto eternal salvation. The convert then was an adult, and received baptism as his explicit confession, and open adoption of the new faith. To bring men "to believe with the heart, and to confess with the tongue," the divinity of the Redeemer, was to bring them to be truly converted. "No man could say that Jesus was the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." As the apostles had neither reputation to influence, nor authority to compel, nor riches to bribe, so it is obvious that there was nothing to attract men to Christianity, except their full conviction of its divine truth. It was hostile to their secular advancement, to their interests, their reputation, their safety. Hypocrisy was consequently a rare, when it was a losing sin. A hypocrite was not likely to embrace a faith by which he was sure to gain nothing in this world, if it were false; and nothing till after his death, if it were true. Christians were such optionally, or not at all.

It was not then probable, that he who was baptized under such circumstances, would be merely an external convert. According to all human means of judging, that "faith" existed, which is said by an article to be "confirmed" in baptism; and this holy sacrament became not only an initiatory, but a confirmatory rite.

There were at that time no hereditary professors; there was no such thing as Christianity by transmission. There
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was therefore a broad line to step over, whenever the new faith was adopted. There was no gradual introduction into it by education, no slipping into it by habit, no wearing its badge by fashion.

But if the novelty attending the early introduction to Christianity has ceased; if living in a land where it is universally professed, being educated in some acquaintance with the Christian faith, finding easy access into the temples in which it is preached, habitually attending on its services, living under laws which are imbued with its spirit; if all this takes off the apparent effect, if it lessens the surprise, if it moderates the joy and wonder, which a total change in external circumstances was calculated to excite; if it even lessens in a degree the visible alteration produced in hearts awakened by it; if this change was more obvious in the conversion of those who were before wallowing in the grossest abominations, or sunk in the most degrading superstitions, than in those who are conversant with the decencies of life, who had previously observed the forms of religion, and practised many of the social virtues; yet, in the views and in the feelings, in the heart and in the spirit, in the principle of the mind, and in the motive of the conduct, the change in the one case has a very near affinity to the change in the other. The difference of circumstances diminishes nothing of the real power of divine grace; it does not alter the nature of the change inwardly effected; it does not manifest now, less than it did then, the pitifulness of God's great mercy in delivering, those who are tied and bound with the chain of their sins.

Had St. Paul been a profligate or immoral man, we apprehend that his conversion would, as an example, have lost much of its power. The two extremes of character might in that case, indeed, more forcibly strike the superficial inquirer. But to show the turpitude of gross vice, a miracle is not necessary; Christianity is not necessary. The thing was self-evident; Antoninus and Epictetus could have shown it. But for a man who had previously such strong claims to respect from others, such pretensions on which to value himself,—his Hebrew descent; his early initiation into the distinguishing Jewish rite; his Pharisaic exactness, an exactness not hypocritical, but conscientious; his unquestionable morals, his blameless righteousness in all that pertained to the law, his correctness of demeanor, his strict observance of religious forms; that such a man should need the further subjugation of his passions, his
pride, his bigotry, and uncharitableness; that, in short, he should require a total and radical renovation of the character and the soul,—this was indeed a wonder worthy of divine inspiration to declare, as well as of Divine grace to accomplish; and this change, when really effected, afforded an appeal for the truth of the doctrine, both to the heart and to the understanding, more powerful than volumes of arguments.

St. Paul was aware, that there is frequently more danger where there is less scandal; that some fancy they are reformed, because they have exchanged the sensual for the spiritual vices; that in truth, men oftener change their sins than their nature, put pride into their correctness, and violence into their zeal, and uncharitableness into their sobriety, and covetousness into their prudence, and censoriousness into their abstinence. Among the better disposed, he knew there were many who, after they are brought to embrace religion, think they have nothing more to do. They were, perhaps, sincere in their inquiries, and their convictions were strong. But having once obtained a confidence in their acceptance, they conclude that all is well. They live upon their capital, if we may be allowed the expression; and so depend upon their assurance, as if their personal work was done. To both of these classes he directs the warning voice, Go on unto perfection. To both he virtually represents, that if the transformation were real, it would animate them to increased earnestness; while their desires would be more fervent, their piety would not evaporate in desires, their constant fear of relaxing would quicken their progress.

It is worth remarking, that throughout the Holy Scriptures, and especially throughout the writings of the apostle—striving with principalities and powers, putting on the whole armor of God, continuing instant in prayer, seeking those things which are above, mortifying your members, avoiding inordinate affections and covetousness, which is idolatry, are not applied to the profane, or even to the careless, but to those who had made a great proficiency in religion; not to novices, but to saints. These are continually cautioned against sitting down at ease in their religious possessions; they are exhorted, on the contrary, to augment them. It is not, as an able writer says, “longing after great discoveries, nor after great tastes of the love of God, nor longing to be in heaven, nor longing to die, that are such distinguishing marks of a perfect Christian, as longing after a more holy heart, and living a more holy life.”

* Dr. Owen on the Holy Spirit.
The apostle shows that we must not sit down satisfied even in the habitual desire, even in the general tendency to what is right. He frequently stirs up the reader to actual exercise, to quickening exertions: without such movements, he knew that desire might sink into unproductive wishes; that good tendencies might come short of their aim. This brief, but comprehensive hint—not as though I had already attained—frequently recollected and acted upon, will serve to keep up in the mind, that we are capable of much higher things than we have yet achieved—and that, while we are diligently ascending by each progressive step, we must still stretch forward our view to the culminating point.

If, then, even the most conspicuous converts of St. Paul required to be confirmed by incessant admonition; if he did not think the most heroic Christians so established as to be arrived at their ultimate state; if he did not think the most advanced so secure as to be trusted to go alone, so complete in themselves as to lose sight of their dependence; if they required to be exhorted to go on unto perfection; to be renewed from day to day; to stand fast; to quit themselves like men; to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might to stand against the wiles of the devil; and having done all, to stand—"Let us not be high minded, but fear." If we believe that the Spirit was poured out in more abundant measure in the incipient state, than on us in the more established position of the Church; yet we see their superiority, in this respect, neither lessened the necessity of caution in the instructor, nor of diligence in the hearer.

CHAP. XXI.

On the superior advantages of the present period, for the attainment of knowledge, religion, and happiness.

We have heard of a royal infidel, who was impious enough to declare, that had the Maker of the universe consulted him at the Creation, he could have given him hints for the improvement of his plan. Many, who do not go so far as to regret that their advice was not asked when the world was made, practically intimate that they could improve upon the scheme of Providence in carrying it on
We have met with persons, who, not fully satisfied with the evidences of Christianity, at least not quite firm in the practical adoption of its truths, have expressed a wish, that for the more complete confirmation of their faith, their lot had been cast in this, or in that particular age, in which they might have cleared up their doubts, and removed their difficulties.

Now, though it is not permitted to indulge any wish contrary to the appointment of him who fixes the bounds of our habitation, and ordains our whole lot in life; yet it should seem that we, in this age and country, have the most abundant reason, not only to be peculiarly grateful that it has fallen at this precise period. Who, that reflects at all will maintain, that any era in the history of the world, whether antecedent or subsequent, to the institution of Christianity, could have afforded clearer lights or higher aids than the present? or would have conduced to make us wiser, better, or happier? Let us be assured, that if we do not see truth with sufficient distinctness, it is not our own position, nor that of the object, which is in fault, but the organ itself.

It is not to our present purpose to insist on the internal evidence of Christianity; on that witness within—that conviction of the Christian's own mind, arguing so strongly the truth of Revelation from its correspondence to his own wants—because this is an evidence equally accessible to the believer of every period. We shall, therefore, only offer a few observations on the superior advantages which we at present enjoy, as well from other causes, as from the fulness of the external evidence which has been undeniable established upon the profoundest knowledge and closest examination of the Sacred Records, by so many of our wisest and soundest divines.

We have, for our assistance in religious knowledge, the collective wisdom of sacred antiquity; and for our furtherance in piety, its precepts, its monitions, its examples. It is also the peculiar honor of our apostle, that from his life and writings alone, a new confirmation of the truth of the Gospel which he preached, has been recently and completely made out. In addition to the fullest general evidence of the authenticity of the New Testament, two of our own contemporaries—men of different rank, habits, education, and turn of mind,—have extracted from the writings of St. Paul exclusively, particular and collateral evidence of a most interesting and important nature. We refer; in the first instance, to a small but valuable work of a noble author.*

* Lord Littleton
himself a convert of no common order, in which he lays down, and substantially proves the truth of his position, that the conversion and apostleship of St. Paul alone, duly considered, is, of itself, a demonstration, sufficient to prove Christianity to be a Divine Revelation. Into these circumstances, which it is probable powerfully assisted his own convictions, he has with great diligence examined; and has with irresistible strength proposed them for the conviction of others.

In the other instance, we refer to that exquisite work, the "Horæ Paulinae," of Doctor Paley; a work which exhibits a species of evidence as original as it is incontrovertible. It is a corroboration of the truth of the New Testament, derived from the incidental but close correspondence of numberless passages in the life and travels of St. Paul, related in the Acts, with his own repeated reference, in his epistles, to the same circumstances, persons, places, and events; together with their most correct geographical agreement;—the respective authors of both writings uniformly and consistently, though unintentionally, throwing light on each other.

This interesting work, in a more especial manner, adds weight to facts which were already fully established, and strength to that "truth" which was before "barred up with ribs of iron." We cannot too highly estimate this subsidiary evidence to the Christian revelation, derived as it were casually and incidentally from our apostle, from him to whom we were already unspeakably indebted for so much direct spiritual and practical instruction. It is a species of evidence so ingenious, yet so solid, so clear and so decisive, that the author must have carried his point in any court of judicature before which the cause might have been brought.

If it were not the very genius of skepticism to shrink its "shrivelled essence" down to the minutest point, when it wishes to work itself an entrance where no visible opening seems previously to have been left, we should think, that, after the able defences of revelation which have been made on general grounds, the addition of these partial and subordinate, but not less convincing, proofs, had not left even the smallest crevice through which unbelief could force, or even doubt insinuate its way.

But to quit this more limited channel of conviction for the broad current of general Scripture, let us examine what period would have been more favorable, not only for the confirmation of our belief, but for our moral, our intellectual and spiritual improvement. Let us institute an inquiry, (if a few cursory and superficial remarks may be so called,)
whether all those whose supposed superior opportunities of religious improvement we are disposed to envy, really possessed more advantages than ourselves; and whether many among them were induced, in consequence of their peculiar situation to make the best use of those which they actually did possess.

How very few of those who were not only countrymen, but contemporaries of our blessed Redeemer, believed in Him, or at least persevered in their belief! Even of his immediate disciples, even of his select friends, of the favored few who beheld the beautiful consistency of his daily life, who were more intimately privileged to hear the gracious words which proceeded from his lips: we pass by the son of perdition:—one had not courage so much as to acknowledge that he knew him; another doubted his identity after his resurrection. In the moment of exquisite distress, they all forsook him. His own "familiar friends," abandoned him, and of the people there was none with him."

Where then were the peculiar, the enviable advantages, of that situation, placed in which, the fervent Peter, who declared that though all men should forsake him, yet would not he; yet Peter forgot his oath, and forfeited his fidelity! Can we affirm, that we have stronger or more tender religious attachments, than "the disciple whom Jesus loved?" Yet was he one of that all who forsook him. Are we sure that it is a superiority in our faith, rather than in our circumstances, which makes us to differ from those affectionate but troubled companions, who, after his crucifixion, sunk into the most hopeless despondency:—"We trusted that this should have been He who should have redeemed Israel." Cannot we, on the contrary, exultingly say, We know that this was He who has redeemed, not Israel only, but every penitent believer, of every people, and kindred, and nation, to the end of the world. After the truth of our Lord's divine mission had been ratified by his resurrection from the dead, and the descent of the Holy Spirit, how many who heard the preaching, and beheld the miracles of his apostles, remained hardened in incredulity! In the ages immediately succeeding the promulgation of the Gospel, even while its verities were new, and the sense of its blessings fresh, many of its professors fell into gross errors; some tainted its purity by infusions of their own; others incorporated with it the corruptions of Paganism. Many became heretics, some became apostates, not a few renounced Christianity, and more perhaps dishonored it.

Does not St. Paul, after his incessant labors, even after
his apparent success in one quarter of the globe, sorrowfully exclaim to his friend, "Thou knowest that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me." He then proceeds to enumerate individuals, of whom, it may be presumed, that he once entertained better hopes. While, therefore, we possess the works of this great apostle, and still many continue to receive so little benefit from them, let not any deceive themselves with the notion, that they would have derived infallible sanctification from his personal preaching; but let them remember, that all proconsular Asia,* who enjoyed that blessing, deserted both him and the Gospel. May not even the advantage, considered in some points of view, be reckoned on our side? If we may trust his own humble report of himself, "his letters," he says, "were allowed to be more weighty and powerful than his bodily presence."

If so many were perverted, who had the privilege of standing the nearest to the fountain of light, who even drank immediately from the living spring itself, shall we look for a more luminous exhibition or more privileged exercise, or more sincere "obedience" of Christian "faith," in the middle ages, when, in truth, religion was in a good measure extinguished; when the Christian world had sunk into almost primeval darkness; "when Christianity," to borrow the words of Melancthon, "was become a mere compound of philosophy and superstition;" when what religion did survive, was confined to a few, was immured in cloisters, was exhausted in quibbles, was wasted in unprofitable subtleties, was exhibited with little speculative clearness, and less practical influence?

Even when literature and religion awoke together from their long slumber, when Christianity was renovated and purified, the glorious beams of the reformation did not diffuse universal illumination. Even by better disposed, but partially enlightened minds, contention was too frequently mistaken for piety, and debate substituted for devotion.

Of how different a spirit from these wrangling polemics was St. Paul! Though he repeatedly exhorts his friends, especially Timothy, in instructing his people, to watch particularly "over their doctrine," the grand foundation on which all preaching must be built, yet he ever shows himself an enemy to controversy, to frivolous disputes, and idle contention. He directs his converts, not to waste the time and strength, which should be reserved for great occasions, about words to no profit but subverting the hearers

* 2 Timothy, ch. 1.
And, perhaps, there has seldom been less genuine piety in the church than when intricate and theoretical points in theology have been most pertinaciously discussed. This is not "contending for the faith once delivered to the saints," but diverting the attention from faith, and alienating the heart from charity.

We do not mean to censure a spirit of inquiry, nor to repress earnestness, in the solution of difficulties. It is indeed the very essence of an inquiring mind freely to start doubts, as it is of a learned and enlightened age rationally to solve them. On this point we are quite of the opinion of a good old divine, that "nothing is so certain as that which is certain after doubts." But compared even with the latter period of religious light and information, how far superior is our own? We who have the happiness to live in the present age, live, when truth has had time to force its way through all the obscurities which had been raised about it, to prevent its access to the understanding. If we rightly appreciate our advantages, we shall truly find that no country, in any age, was ever placed in a fairer position for improvement in wisdom, in piety, and happiness. A black cloud indeed, charged with sulphureous matter, for a long time was suspended over our heads; but, providentially directed, it passed on, and bursting, spread conflagration over other lands. By the most exact retributive justice, those very countries in which the modern Titans first assaulted Heaven, became the first scene of total desolation. In other places we have seen experiments tried, new in their nature, terrible in their progress, and worse than fruitless in their results. We have seen a great nation endeavoring to show the world that they could do without God. We have seen them exclude the Maker from his own creation! and to complete the opposition between their own government, and his whom they gloried in dethroning, they used their impiously assumed power for the extermination of the species which he had created, for the destruction of the souls whom he had sent his Son to redeem.

If, however, in our own age, and perhaps our own country, Christianity has not only been boldly opposed, but audaciously vilified, it has been only so much the more seriously examined, so much the more vigorously defended. If its truth has been questioned by some, and denied by others, it has been only the more carefully sifted, the more satisfactorily cleared. The clouds in which sophistry had sought to envelope it, are dispersed; the charges which skepticism had brought against it, are repelled. The facts,
arch-like, have been strengthened by being trampled upon. Infidelity has done its worst, and by the energy of its efforts, and the failure of its attempts, has shown how little it could do. Wit, and ingenuity, and argument, have contributed each its quota to confirm the truths which wit, and ingenuity, and argument, had undertaken to subvert. Talents on the wrong side have elicited superior talents on the right, and the champions of the Gospel have beaten its assailants with their own weapons. Phyrrhonism has been beneficial, for by propagating its doubts it has caused them to be obviated. Even atheism itself has not been without its uses, for by obtruding its impurities, it has brought defeat on the objections, and abhorrence on their abettors. Thus the enemies of our faith have done service to our cause, for they have not advanced a single charge against it, which has not been followed by complete refutation; the shaking of the torch has caused it to diffuse a clearer and stronger light.

Let us once more resume the comparison of our advantages, and the use we make of them, with the advantages and the conduct of these ancient servants of God, in considering whom, perhaps, we mingle envy with our admiration. How fervently did these saints of the Old Testament pant for that full blaze of light under which we live, and for which we are so little thankful!—"I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!" was the heart-felt apostrophe of a devout patriarch. The aged saint who "waited for the consolation of Israel, and rapturously sung his Nunc dimittis,"—the ancient prophetess, who departed not from the temple, who desisted not from prayer day or night;—the father of the Baptist, who "blessed the Lord God of Israel that he had visited and redeemed his people;"—how small were their advantages compared with ours. How weak is our faith, how freezing our gratitude compared with theirs!† They only beheld in their Saviour a feeble infant;—they had not heard, as we have heard, from the most undeniable authority, the perfections of his life, nor the miracles of his power, nor the works of his mercy, nor his triumph over death, nor his ascension into heaven, nor the descent of the Comforter. They had witnessed a large portion of the globe brought within the Christian pale by the preaching of that Gospel, the dawn of which so exhilarated their overflowing hearts. If full beatitude is promised to them who have not seen, and yet have believed; what will be the state of those who virtually have seen, and yet have not believed?

* Luke ch. i
† Luke ch. ii
Had any patriarch, or saint, who was permitted only some rare and transient glimpses of the promised blessing, being allowed in prophetic glimpses of the long vista of ages, which lay in remote futurity, before him—had he been asked whether, if his power concurred with his choice, in what age and in what nation he would have wished his lot assigned him—is it not more than probable that he would have replied—in Great Britain, in the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century.

May we not venture to assert, that there are, at this moment, on the whole, more helps and fewer hindrances to the operation of Christian piety, than at any preceding period? May we not assert, that at no time has the genuine religion of the Gospel been more precisely defined, more completely stried of human inventions, more purified from philosophical infusions on one hand, and on the other, more cleared from superstitious perversions, fanatical in-temperance, and debasing associations? That there still exist among us philosophers and fanatics, not a few, we are far from denying; but neither is the distortion of faith in the one party, nor its subversion in the other, the prevailing character; good sense and right mindedness predominate in our general views of Christianity.

If it be objected that there is a very powerful aid wanting to the confirmation of our faith, which the age of the apostles presented—that of miraculous gifts—the obvious answer is, that if they have ceased, it is because they have fully answered the end for which they were conferred: and is not the withdrawing of these extraordinary endowments more than compensated by the fulfilment of so many of the prophecies of the New Testament, and the anticipation of the near approach of others, yet unaccomplished? In the meantime have we not the perpetual attestation of those living miracles, the unaltered state of the Jewish church, and the frequent internal renovation of the human heart?

There is not a more striking feature in the character of the Royal Psalmist, than the fervent and reiterated expressions of his love and admiration of the holy Scriptures. In what a variety of rapturous strains does he pour out the overflowings of his ardent soul! "Oh! how I love thy law! Thy word is a lamp to my feet—Oh teach me thy statutes! Thy words have I hid within my heart—open thou mine eyes, that I may see the wondrous things of thy law!" To give a full view of his affectionate effusions, would be to transcribe the larger portion of the Psalms.
To paraphrase his words, would be to dilute essential spirit

Let us pause a moment, and while we admire this holy fervency, let us blush at our own ingratitude for advantages so superior: let us lament our own want of spiritual sensibility. Let us be humbled at the reflection, how very small was the portion of Scripture with which David was acquainted! How comparatively little did he know of that divine book, yet what holy transport was kindled by that little! He knew scarcely more than the Pentateuch, and one or two contemporary prophets. Then let us turn our eyes to the full revelation under which we live, and be grateful for the meridian splendor.

Had David seen, as we see, the predictions of the late prophetical writers, those of Isaiah especially, to say no thing of his own, fulfilled—had he seen, as we have seen, their glorious accomplishment in the New Testament—the incarnation and resurrection of Christ, the plenary gift of the Holy Spirit, the fulfilment of types, the substantiation of shadows, the solution of figures, the destruction of Jerusalem, the wide propagation of the everlasting Gospel, and that in far more tongues than were heard on the day of Pentecost,—had he seen a Bible in every cottage—a little seminary of Christian institution in every village—had he beheld the firm establishment of the Christian church, no longer opposed, but supported by secular powers, after having conquered opposition by weapons purely spiritual—had he seen a standing ministry continued in a regular succession, from the age of the apostles to the present hour—had he seen, in addition to these domestic blessings, England emancipating Africa and evangelizing India, commerce spreading her sails to promote civilization, and Christianity elevating civilization and sanctifying commerce—had the royal saint witnessed this combination of mercies in one single country, what had his feelings been?

He who so passionately exclaimed, "Oh how amiable are thy dwellings, thou Lord of Hosts!—my soul hath a desire and a longing to enter into the courts of the Lord—blessed are they that dwell in thine house—one day in thy courts is better than a thousand—one thing have I desired of the Lord, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit his temple"—this conqueror of the heathen, this denouncer of false gods, this chosen monarch of the chosen people, this fervent lover of the devotions of the sanctuary,
this hallowed poet of Sion, this noble contributor to our public worship, this man after God's own heart, was not permitted to build one single church—we in this island only, possess ten thousand.

But some may say, the apostles had supernatural supports, which are withheld from us. Their supports were doubtless proportioned to the fervency of their faith, and to the extraordinary emergencies on which they were called to act. But as we had occasion to remark in a former chapter, these assistances seem to have been reserved for occasions to which we are not called; and to be dispensed to them for others rather than for themselves. We do not find that they who could cure diseases, were exempted from suffering them; that they who could raise others from the dead, escaped a violent death themselves. We do not find that the aids afforded them, were given to extinguish their natural feelings, to lighten their burdens, to rescue them from the vicissitudes of a painful life, from poverty or sorrows, from calumny or disgrace. Though St. Paul converted the jailor, he had nevertheless been his prisoner; though he had been the instrument of making "saints even in Cæsar's household," he was not delivered from perishing by Cæsar's sword.

It does not appear that in their ordinary transactions they had the assistance of more than the ordinary operations of the Spirit. These, blessed be Almighty Goodness! are not limited to prophets or apostles, but promised to all sincere believers, to the end of the world: communicated in a measure proportioned to their faith, and accommodated to their exigencies. The treasures of grace, unlike all other treasures, are not to be exhausted by using; but like the multiplication of loaves, more is left to be gathered up after the gift is used, than was imparted in the first instance.

CHAP. XXII.

Conclusion.—Cursory inquiry into some of the causes which impeded general improvement.

If we, in this favorite country, and at this favored period, are not as internally happy as we are outwardly prosperous; if we do not reach that elevation in piety; if we do not exhibit that consistency of character, which, from the advantages of our position, might be expected; if innumerable
providential distinction are conferred without being proportionally improved; if we are rejoicing for public blessings, without so profiting by them as to make advancement in private virtue and personal religion;—should we not diligently inquire in what particulars our deficiencies chiefly consist, and what are the obstructions which especially impede our progress?

That middle course which the luke-warm Christian takes, he takes partly because it seems to carry with it many present advantages, which the genuine Christian loses. This measured conduct obtains for him that general popularity, the desire of which is his mainspring of action. He secures the friendship of worldly men, because he can accommodate his taste to their conversation, and bend his views to their practices. As he is not profligate, the pious who are naturally candid, judge him favorably, and entertain hopes of his becoming all they wish; so that he unites the credit of their good opinion with the pleasure derived from the society of the others. A neutral character thus converts everything to his own profit, avoids the suspicion attached to saints, and the disgrace inseparable from sinners. To disoblige the world, is, upon his principles, a price almost too high for the purchase of heaven itself. Is it not doubtful, whether he who accounts it so easy a matter to be a Christian, is a Christian in reality? To such an one, indeed, it is as easy as it is pleasant to reckon upon heaven; but can any, without faith and without patience, be followers of them, who, "through faith and patience inherit the promises?"

The truth is, mere men of the world do not conceive a very formidable opinion of the real evil of sin: they think slightly of it because it is so common; they even think almost favorably, at least they think charitably of it, when they see that even good men are not altogether exempt from it. From carelessmess, or an erroneous kindness, they entertain a tender opinion of what they perceive to be a constant attendant on human nature: they plead, in its vindication, the mercy of God, the weakness of man, the power of temptation; and are apt to construe a strict judgment on the thing into an uncharitable harshness on the man. For this forbearance they expect to be paid in kind, to be paid with interest; for their very charity is usurious. The least religious, however, often resent keenly those crimes which offend against society; of sins which affect their own interest, they are the most forward to seek legal redress. But they do not feel that some of the worst cor-
ruptions are of a spiritual nature; and to those which only offend God, they never show themselves tenderly alive.

But if they were brought to entertain just notions of the glorious majesty of God, they would soon learn to see how sin dishonors it; nor could an adequate view of his unspeakable holiness fail of leading them to a thorough hatred of every thing which is in direct opposition to it. If, however, their own impure vision prevents them from perceiving how deeply sin must offend the infinite purity of God, they might at least be awfully convinced of its malignant nature, by contemplating the wide and lasting ravages it has made among the human race. That can be no considerable evil, which has been perpetuating itself, and entailing misery on its perpetrators for nearly six thousand years.

Many are too much disposed to confound a confident feeling of security with religious peace. Conscience, whose suggestions were perhaps once clamorous, may, from long neglect, have become gradually less and less audible. The more obtuse the feelings grow, the less disturbance they give. This moral deadness assumes the name of tranquillity, and, as Galgacus said of the Roman conquerors, in his noble speech on the Grampian hills, "when they have laid all waste, they call the desolation Peace."

Is there not a growing appearance, that many are substituting for the integrity of Christian doctrine, as taught in the Gospel, a religion compounded chiefly of the purer elements of Deism, amalgamated with some of the more popular attributes of Christianity! If the apostle, after all his high attainments, "was determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified," shall a deteriorated, or, as it is pleased to call itself, a liberal Christianity, lead its votaries to be satisfied with knowing every thing except him; that is, to be satisfied without knowing him in such a manner, as at once to believe in him as a prophet, and to be ruled by him as a king; at once to obey him as a teacher, and trust in him as a Saviour?

On the other hand, let us remember, that we may be correct in our creed, without possessing a living faith. We may be right in our opinions, without any cordial concurrence of the heart, or any obedient subjugation of the will. We may be regular in the forms of devotion, and irregular in our passions. We may be temperate in what regards the animal appetites, and intemperate in the indulgence of evil tempers. We may be proud of our own orthodoxy, while we ridicule a serious spirit in another professor of
the same opinions. We may maintain a customary habit of prayer, while we are destitute of that spirit, without which prayer is unavailable. May not some pray without invoking the mediation of the great Intercessor? May he not say to some now, as he said to his disciples, *Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name?* We do not mean so invoking him, as to round the closing period with his name, but so regarding him, as to make him the general medium of our intercourse with Heaven.

And is it not an increasing evil, that there seems to prevail among some, a habit, so to speak, of generalizing religion, of melting down the peculiar principles of Christianity, till its grand truths are blended in the fusion, and come out of the crucible without any distinctive character? A fundamental doctrine of our religion is, with many, grown not only into disuse, but discredit. But unless a man can seriously say, that his natural powers are fully effectual for his practical duties; that he is uniformly able of himself to pursue the right which he approves, and to avoid the wrong which he condemns, and to surmount the evil which he laments, and to resist the temptations which he feels; it should seem that he ought in reason to be deeply thankful for that divine aid which the Gospel promises, and on which St. Paul descants with such perpetual emphasis; that he ought gladly to implore its communication by the means prescribed by this great apostle.

If a man does not set up on his own strength; if he cannot live upon his own resources, if he finds that his good intentions are often frustrated, his firmest purposes forgotten, his best resolutions broken; if he feels that he cannot change his own heart; if he believes that there is a real spiritual assistance offered, and that the communication of this aid is promised to fervent prayer; it should seem to follow, as a necessary consequence, that this interior sentiment would lower his opinion of himself, change his notions of the Divine character, diminish his feeling of self-dependence, loosen his attachment to sense, make him more indifferent to human opinion, and more solicitous for the favor of God. This humbling, yet elevating intercourse with Heaven, would seem to convince him feelingly, that of himself he can do nothing; that human estimation can confer no intrinsic value, because it cannot make us what we are not; and that we are, in reality, only what we are in the sight of God.

There is another cause which hurts the interests of religion. Injurious names are reciprocally given to the most
imperious duties; parties take different sides, and match them each against the other as if they were opposite interests. But no power of words can alter the nature of things. Good works are not Popery; nor is faith Methodism. Yet, is not a spiritual litigation vigorously carried on between two principles, both of which are of the very essence of the Gospel, and bound up therein in the most intimate and indissoluble union? Let us not reject a truth because it is misrepresented by those who do not understand it. We know that a learned bishop was condemned by an ignorant pope, for propagating no worse a heresy than that there were antipodes.

Many, again, desire to be religious, but suffer the desire to die away without any effort to substantiate it; without any cordial adoption of the means which might produce the effect. Yet, with this inoperative desire, the languid Christian quiets conscience, and is satisfied with referring to this unproductive wish as an evidence of his sincerity. The effect is similar to that of a deceitful anodyne, which lulls pain without removing its cause. There are those who may be said to swallow religion as something which they are told it is their duty to take, in order to do them good. They therefore receive it in the lump, and then dismiss it from their thoughts as a thing done. It is no wonder if the success is proportioned to the measure. But would the apostle have so strenuously insisted on the necessity of being "renewed from day to day," if there were any definite day in which it could be affirmed that the work had been accomplished? And can any thing short of such accomplishment, justify us in desisting to press forward after it?

If, then, we would embrace Christianity as a life-giving principle, we must examine it analytically; we must resolve it into the several parts of which it is compounded, instead of considering it as a nostrum the effect of which is to be produced by our ignorance of the ingredients of which it is made up. To subscribe articles of faith, without knowing what consequences they involve—to be satisfied with having them propounded, without entering into the spirit of our obligation to obey them—to acknowledge their truth, without examining our own interest in them, is not only to be an imperfect, but an irrational Christian.

While the political and moral improvement of the world around us seems, in many respects, to be simultaneously advancing, let not us, of this highly distinguished land, frustrate the grand objects which we have been the honored
instruments of establishing. Britain presents a spectacle, on which, if the world gazes with an admiring, it will gaze also with a scrutinizing eye. Those whom we have served and saved, will jealously inquire—for the obliged are not the least prying—Whether we live up to the high tone we assume?—Whether we obey the Gospel we extol?—Whether we are religious in person, or by proxy?—Whether all who disperse the Scriptures, read them?—May not the critical observer be inclined to parody the interrogatories of our apostle to the censorious Jews.* Thou that sayest another should not swear, art thou guilty of profane levity? Thou that sayest a man should keep the sixth and seventh commandments, dost thou shrink from duelling and libertinism? Thou, who holdest out a fair example in attending the solemnities of the Sunday morning's worship, dost thou attend likewise the unhallowed festivities of the evening? Thou that art valiant in the field, art thou also "valiant for the truth?" Thou who, professing "pure religion and undefiled," visitest the fatherless and widow with thy purse, dost thou keep thyself "unspotted from the world?" Let it be observed, that these are hypothetical questions, not rash accusations.

The public munificence and private bounties of this age and country have outgone all example. An almost boundless benevolence has annihilated all distinction of religion and of party, of country and of color. No difference of opinion, no contrariety of feeling, has checked its astonishing operation, has chilled its ardent flame. No object is too vast for its grasp, none is too minute for its attention. The moral energies of the country have kept pace with the military and political. * Charity, too, has been intimately connected with religion; and we may hope, it is to the growth of the latter principle, that we are to ascribe the former practical effect.

It remains with us to give substantial proof, that the right practice has flowed from the true principle. Let us never give occasion to the members of another church to infer, that even Protestants are not practically averse from the purchase of indulgences. Let us not give them the slightest cause for imputing to any of our acts of beneficence a spirit of commutation. Let them not see, that sobriety, purity, and self-control, are considered by many of us as minor statutes in the Christian code.

Let it not be said, that personal holiness is laid asleep by the soothing blandishments of liberal profession; by the

* Romans, xxi. 22.
misapplied tenderness of candid construction; by a tole

tion which justifies the doing much which is not right to

ourselves, because we make large allowances for whatever

is wrong in others. To judge charitably, is a Christian

precept; but religion no more permits us to judge falsely,

than to act censurably. To the affluent it is cheaper, and

to the inconsiderate it is easier, to relieve others, than
to deny ourselves. Let them remember, however, that

though to give liberally is nobly right; yet to act consist-

ently is indispensably requisite, if we would make that

which is in itself right acceptable to God; and let even the

most benevolent never fail to reflect, that nothing can swell
the tide of charity to its full flow, but self-denial.

If some among us were to make their public bounties
the measure of their domestic conduct, it would be setting
up for themselves a high practical standard: yet it might
be fair to make it so. Such liberal persons might do well
to consider how far, in every subscription they pay, they
do not give a sort of public pledge of their general practice;
and how far, in order to be honest, they are not bound to
redeem the deposit by their general correctness. Is it not
a species of deceit to appear better than we are? And do
we not virtually practice this deceit when our self-govern-
ment is obviously not of a piece with our liberality?

Do we then undervalue charity? God forbid. Charity
is a grace so peculiarly Christian, that it is said to have
been practised in those countries only where Revelation
has been enjoyed either by possession or tradition. Of the
historians of ancient times, who have transmitted to us the
fame of their military skill, their political glory, their litera-
ry talents, their public spirit, or domestic virtues, none have
made any mention of their charitable institutions; none
have made any mention of a great nation receiving into its
bosom, in the moment of imminent danger, of foreign war,
and pressing domestic distress, myriads of exiles from the
enemy’s country; of their receiving and supporting thou-
sands upon thousands of the priesthood of a religion so
hostile to their own, as scarcely to allow them to believe
that there was salvation for their benefactors.

Benevolence is the most lovely associate of the other
Christian virtues. We mistake only when we adopt her
as their substitute. Excellence in this grand article is so
far from procuring a dispensation from the other graces of
piety, that she only raises the demand for their loftier ex-
ercice. In the Christian race, however, the fleeter virtue
must not slacken her speed, lest her competitors should be
distanced. No; the lagging attributes must quicken theirs.

We trust that we have not, in any part of this little work, attempted to degrade human reason. Is it degrading any quality or faculty, to assign to it its proper place, to ascribe to it its precise value? Reason and religion accord as completely in practice as in principle; and is it not a subject of gratitude to God, that as there is nothing in Christian belief, so there is nothing in Christian practice, but what is consonant to views purely rational. Every disorder, irregularity, and excess, which religion prohibits, is as contrary to our comfort, health, and happiness here, as it is fatal to our eternal interests; and should be equally avoided on the ground of natural and spiritual judgment. Nay, if Christians are accused by the infidel of selfish motives, in obeying God for their own interest; is there not more absurdity in disobeying Him, when, by so doing, we forfeit every thing which a well-directed self-love would show to be our highest advantage, and which common sense, human prudence, worldly wisdom, would teach us to pursue.

St. Paul combats all those partialities of judgment which arise from the understanding submitting itself to the will, from conviction yielding to inclination. As it was the truth of the principle, the rectitude of the act, which determined his judgment, so we read to him to little purpose, if the same qualities do not also determine ours. But men submit to unexamined predilections; they do not allow themselves to be convinced of any thing with which they are not first pleased. Practical errors are rarely adopted from conviction, but almost always from inclination.

Our apostle frequently includes "lovers of their own-selves" in his catalogue of grievous offenders. He considers selfishness as a state of mind inconsistent with Christianity. No other religion, indeed, had ever shown that it was sinful; no other had ever taught its followers to resist it; no other had furnished arms against it, had enabled its disciples to conquer it. Yet, may we not venture to assert, that among the prominent faults of this our age, is a growing selfishness. We mean not that sullen selfishness which used to display itself in penurious habits, in shabby parsimony, and a sordid frugality, which received part of its punishment in the self-inflicted severities of its votary, and part in the discredit and contempt which attended it. But we mean, that luxurious selfishness which has its own gratification in the vanity it indulges; and its own reward in the envy it secretly awakens, in the admiration it openly excites.
The tide of an increasing dissipation, gorgeous, costly, and voluptuous beyond all precedent, has swept away the mounds and ramparts within which prudence in expense, and sobriety in manners, had heretofore confined it. Strange! that fashion and custom, and the example of others, are brought forward as a vindication by beings, who know they must be themselves individually responsible for the errors and the sins into which they are plunged by imitation, as well as by original evil. Numbers are pleaded, as a valid apology for being carried headlong down the torrent. But have we ever heard that the plague was thought a slighter distemper from the greatness of the numbers infected? On the contrary, is not the extent of the ravage its most alarming symptom? and is not the weekly diminution in the numbers publicly registered as the only signal of returning health?

God has blessed the late unparalleled exertions of this country with a proportionate success. Honor and glory crown our land. But honor and glory are not primary stars; they borrow their lustre from that immortal principal which is the fountain of all moral illumination. Let us bear in mind that to be prosperous without piety, or joyful without gratitude, or thankful without repentance, or penitent without amendment, is to forfeit the favor of Him from whom all prosperity is derived. We are told in the oracles of God, that the corruptions of an irreligious nation converted blessings into sins, when "pride and abundance of idleness" were the ungrateful returns for "fulness of bread."

Though we no longer perceive that open alienation from God, so apparent in the commencement of the French revolution, yet do we perceive that return to Him which the restoration of our prosperity demands? Has the design of the Almighty, in visiting us with the calamities of a protracted war been answered by a renunciation of the sins for which it was sent? Has his goodness, in putting a happy period to these calamities, been practically acknowledged? acknowledged, not merely by the public recognition of a wisely appointed day, but by a visible reformation of our habits and manners?

We are now most imperatively called upon to give unequivocal proof, that our devotion, in the late twenty years succession of national fasts, had some meaning in it, beyond the bare compliance with authority, beyond the mere impulse of terror. Let it not be inferred, from any apparent slackness of principle, that ours was the prayer of na-
ture for relief, more than of grace for pardon; the cry for escape from danger, rather than for deliverance from sin.

As God has abundantly granted us all the temporal blessings for which we then solicited, let us give full proof that our petitions were spiritual as well as political; as He, in pity, has withdrawn the anger of his chastisements, let us, in gratitude, take away the provocation, of our offences. He has long tried us with correction, he is now trying us with mercies. If, as we are told, when his judgments are abroad in the earth, we should learn righteousness, what should we not learn, what should we not practice, when blessings are accumulated upon us—blessings, more multiplied in their number, more ample in their extent, more valuable in their nature, more fraught with present advantages, more calculated for our eternal good, than ever were experienced by our ancestors in any period of our history?

Let us not triumphantly compare ourselves with worse nations, unless we know what use they would have made of mercies which we have neglected; let us not glory in our superiority to countries who have had to plead a bad government, and a worse religion. To be better than those who are bad, is a low superiority now, and will not be admitted as a reason for our acquittal hereafter. Corrupt Tyre, profligate Zidon, whose extinction the prophet Ezekiel had predicted in the most portentous menaces, were pronounced by Infinite Compassion to be far less criminal than the instructed people to whom the pathetic admonition was addressed. If blindness and ignorance might be offered as a plea for those heathen cities, what should extenuate the guilt of the enlightened regions of Galilee.

It was on the most solemn of all occasions, that of a description of the general resurrection, that St. Paul breaks in on his own awful discussion, to suggest the "corruption of manners" inseparable from "evil communications." Does it not give an alarming idea of his serious view of the subject, that he should so intimately connect it with the immediate concerns of the eternal world? Can we safely separate a cause and a consequence which he has so indisolubly joined?

As the joy felt by the patriarchal family in the ark, when the bird of peace, with its symbol in her mouth, returned to this little remnant of an annihilated world; such, in its kind, was the joy experienced when the voice of the charmer was recently heard on our shores, and throughout an almost desolated quarter of the globe. But let not our own country forget that this peace so fervently desired,
and so graciously accorded, may, by our neglecting to improve the blessing, become more fatally and irretrievably injurious, than that state of hostility which we have so long and so justly deplored. Let us not forget, that shutting the gates of the temple of Janus, by opening those of Paris, may only have changed the nature, while it has deteriorated the character, of the warfare.

What incantation is there in the name of peace, that could, as by the touch of a magician's wand, produce, at once, a total revolution in the character of a people, and in our opinion of them? What charm is there in a sound that could so transform a great nation, abandoned for a quarter of a century to boundless vice, and avowed infidelity, as to render familiar intercourse with them profitable, or their society even safe; which could instantaneously convert this scene of alarm, into a scene of irresistible attraction; could cause, at once, this land of terror to be desired as impatiently, and sought as impetuously, as if it had been the land of promise?

Will the borrowed glory, or rather the stolen renown, arising from pilfered pictures, or plundered statues; will the splendor of public buildings, buildings cemented with the blood of millions; will all the works of art, however exquisite, atone for the degradation of the human, and it may be almost said the extinction of the Christian character? Will marbles, and paintings, and edifices, expiate the utter contempt of morality, and all the other still lingering effects of the legal abolition of Christianity and the public disavowal of God? Will the flower of England, the promising sons and blooming daughters of our nobles and our gentry reap a measure of improvement from these exhibitions of genius, which may be likely to compensate for the pernicious associations with which they may be accompanied?

Have we forgotten, that the mother of the fine arts, licentious Greece, injured Rome in her vital interests, her character, her honor, and her principles, more irretrievably, than all her losses during her military conflict with them had done? that this great people, the England of antiquity, never lost sight of her grandeur, never sacrificed her superiority, but when she stooped to imitate the vices, to adopt the manners, and to import the philosophy of the vanquished enemy; and, in short, that Greece amply revenged herself on her conqueror by a contact, which communicated an inextinguishable moral contagion?

To revert to a remoter, and a higher source; did not the
chosen people of God suffer more essentially in their most important interests, by their familiar communications, after their conquest, with the polluted Canaanites, than in their long and perilous warfare with them?

Let not these necessary inquiries be construed into language of vulgar prejudice, into the unchristian wish to perpetuate an unjustifiable aversion to a nation, because they have been our political enemies. We feel no desire, like the Carthagienian father, to entail our own hatred on our offspring, to make our posterity vow interminable hostility to a people, because their predecessors have suffered by them. We have no wish to persist in personal alienation from any country, especially from one which divine Providence has made our nearest neighbor. God forbid! But may we not venture, with all diffidence, to ask, should there not be a little space allowed them, after their deep pollution, to perform that quarantine, which even our ships are obliged to undergo, before we receive them on our own shores? May we not further ask, in the present instance, if by plunging into the infection on theirs, we do not fearfully aggravate the peril of the pestilence?

In these observations we are conscious of wandering into illimitable topics—topics which may appear irrelevant to our general object. It is fit we should resume that object, and draw to a close.

Let us observe, for our own imitation, that what St. Paul might be called to do, or to suffer, in the intermediate stages to his final rest, he knew not, nor was he solicitous to know. Of one thing he was assured, that a day was coming, when, whatever now appeared mysterious, would be made clear. While others only know him of whom they had heard, he knew him in whom he believed. He desired no other ground of confidence. All those superior concerns, on which his heart was set, lay beyond the grave; lay in the hands of him to whom he had trusted all which he accounted valuable. The soul which he had committed to his Saviour, he knew that this Saviour "was able to preserve against that day." Swallowed up in the grandeur of the thought, he disregards the common forms of speech, and leaves it to his friend to supply what was rather understood than expressed—what day he meant.

If it is astonishing that any should disbelieve a religion, which has such unparalleled attestations to its truth, as the religion which St. Paul preached, is it not far more astonishing that, professing not to have any doubt of its truth, any should continue to live as if they believed it to be false;
that any should live without habitual reference to that day, to which his writings so repeatedly point, without laboring after a practical conviction of that paramount doctrine on which he so unweariedly descants, the benefits of the death of Christ?

This doctrine our apostle has, beyond all other writers, irrefragably proved to be the only argument of real efficacy against our own fear of death. All the reasonings of philosophy, all the motives drawn from natural religion, all the self-complacent retrospection of our own virtues, afford no substantial support against it. This great doctrine, as the apostle also repeatedly proves, supplies the only principle which can set us above the sorrows of life. Mere morality often raises us above the grosser corruptions of sense, but it does not raise us above the entanglements of the world; it does not lift us above perplexing fears and anxious solicitudes; it does not raise us above the agitations of desire; it does not rescue us from the doubts and harassings of an unsettled mind; it does not deliver us from the pangs of an awakened conscience. A mere moral taste may sustain character and support credit, but it does not produce present holiness, nor peace, nor a hope full of immortality. It neither communicates strength to obey, nor power to resist, nor a heart to love, nor a will to serve.

Let us then study with holy Paul, that Gospel wherein the true secret of happiness, as well as the great mystery of godliness, is revealed. Our divine teacher does not say read, but search the Scriptures. Its doctrines are of everlasting interest. All the great objects of history lose their value, as through the lapse of time they recede farther from us; but those of the book of God are commensurate with the immortality of our nature. All existing circumstances, as they relate to this world merely, lose their import as they lose their novelty; they even melt in air as they pass before us.

While we are discussing events they cease to be; while we are criticising customs they become obsolete; while we are adopting fashions they vanish; while we are condemning or defending parties, they change sides. While we are contemplating feuds, opposing factions, or deploring revolutions, they are extinct. Of created things, mutability is their character at the best, brevity their duration at the longest. But "the word of the Lord endureth for ever." All that the heart craves, that word supplies. This state of things is all instability; the Gospel points "to a city which hath foundations." Here we have, beyond any other
age or people, seen the kingdoms of this world transferred, depopulated, destroyed: *there* we are promised a kingdom which cannot be moved.

With holy Paul then let us take the Bible for the subject of our meditation, for the ground of our prayer, the rule of our conduct, the anchor of our hope, the standard of our faith. Let us seriously examine whether this faith is built on the same eternal basis with that of the apostle, whose character we have been contemplating, whether we are endeavoring to erect upon it a super-structure of practical goodness worthy of the broad and sure foundation?

Let us close our frequent reference to St. Paul as a pattern for general imitation, by repeating one question illustrative of those opposite qualities which ought to meet in every Christian. If the most zealous advocate of *spiritual influences*, were to select, from all the writers of sacred antiquity, the most distinguished champion of his great cause, on whom would he fix his choice? And if the most strenuous assenter of the duty of *personal activity in moral virtue* were to choose from all mankind the man who most completely exemplified this character in himself, where must he search? Would not the two antagonists, when they meet in the field of controversy, each in defence of his favorite tenet, find that they had fixed on the same man,—Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles? If then we propose him as our model, let us not rest till something of the same combination be formed in ourselves.

To this end let us diligently study his epistles, in which the great doctrines of salvation are amply unfolded, and the mode of its attainment completely detailed. In contemplating the works of this great master of the human mind, we more than perceive, we feel their applicableness to all times, places, circumstances, and persons: and this, not only because the word of eternal life is always the same; but because the human heart, which that word reveals to itself, is still the same also. We behold, as in a mirror, the fidelity, we had almost said the identity, of his representation,—face answering to face. We feel that we are personally interested in every feature he delineates. He lets us into the secrets of our own bosoms. He discloses to us the motives of our own conduct. He touches the true springs of right and wrong, lays bare the moral quality of actions, brings every object to the true point of comparison with each other, and all to the genuine standard of the unerring Gospel. By him we are clearly taught that the same deed done from the desire of pleasing
God, or the desire of popular favor, becomes as different in the eye of religion, as any two actions in the eye of men. There we shall see also, that St. Paul evinced the sincerity of his eternal hopes by constantly preparing himself for their fruition. These hopes shaped his conduct, and moulded his spirit to a resemblance of the state he hoped for: and he best proved his belief that there really was such a state by laboring to acquire the dispositions which might qualify him for its enjoyment. Without this aim, without this effort, without this perseverance, his faith would have been fruitless, his hope delusive, his profession hypocrisy, and his "preaching vain."

Let us image to ourselves the Saviour of the world, holding up professing Christians as a living exemplification of his religion; of that religion which he taught by his doctrines, and ratified by his blood. Let us represent him to our imagination as referring to the lives of his followers for the truth of his word. Do we not tremble at such a responsibility? Do we not shrink from such a comparison? Are we not alarmed at the bare idea of bringing reproach on his Gospel, or dishonor on his name?

Christians! why would you wait till you arrive at heaven, before you contribute to the great end of every dispensation,—namely, that God may be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe? Even now, something of that assimilation should be taking place, which will be perfected when "we shall see Him as He is," and which will never take place if the resemblance begin not here. Beatification is only the finishing of the likeness. Intuition will only complete the transformation.