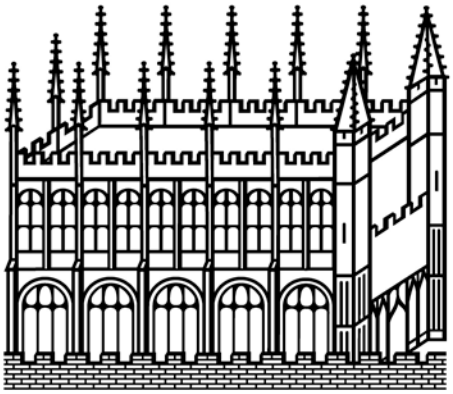

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ESSAYS

AND

TRACTS.

By JOHN ABERCROMBIE, M.D.

1842.

EDINBURGH:
WILLIAM WHYTE AND CO.,
BOOKSELLERS TO THE QUEEN DOWAGER.
LONGMAN AND CO., LONDON; W. COLLINS, GLASGOW; AND
W. CURRY, JUN. AND CO., DUBLIN.

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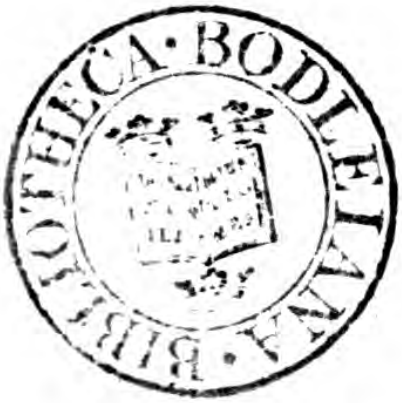
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THE HARMONY

OF

CHRISTIAN FAITH

AND

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

By JOHN ABERCROMBIE, M.D.

NINETEENTH EDITION.

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MDCCCXLII.

PRINTED BY BALFOUR AND JACK, NIDDRY STREET.

The original design of the following Essays was for gratuitous distribution, in a district inhabited chiefly by the Industrious Classes, to which the Author was then attached as a Lay-Elder of the Church of Scotland. They are republished in this form, in the hope that they may be found acceptable to others for a similar purpose.

EDINBURGH, *April* 1835.

TO

THE INDUSTRIOUS CLASSES.

You have lately been addressed on a variety of subjects and by a great variety of individuals, all of whom profess to feel an interest in your welfare. He who now claims your attention will yield to none of them in the deep interest which he takes in you, or in the anxious desire which he feels to contribute any thing in his power towards promoting your comfort, and bettering your condition. He has been long in habits of much intercourse with you, and has learned to know your wants, to enter into your feelings, and to estimate your character. He is now desirous to cul-

tivate that intercourse more and more, and to communicate with you, from time to time, on subjects of the highest interest.

There was a period in the history of this country, now nearly two hundred years ago, when political contests ran very high, and even the pulpits were often made to give forth the sounds of political strife. It is related of a distinguished clergyman of that day, that he was found fault with by his friends for "not preaching to the times." He replied in terms which carry with them a weight of meaning worthy of the most deep and serious attention.— "When so many brethren," said he, "are "preaching to the times, will you not allow "one poor brother to preach to eternity."

For some years past, this country has resounded from end to end, with discussions and contests which relate to "the times." You, of the industrious classes, have had your attention much occupied, shall I say distracted, with these discussions; and each new topic, as it was brought before you, was represented as

ing with it consequences and benefits of

the highest importance to your prosperity and your comfort. Some experiments have consequently been made, and you are, in a measure, qualified to judge whether they have answered your expectations, or fulfilled the promises which were made respecting them. Others are still proposed with equal confidence; what benefits may result from them time will shew.

But, amid all this discussion on "the times," has it never occurred to you that life is passing quickly on, and will very soon be over; that a period is approaching with fearful rapidity, when, regarding each of us, "time shall be no longer." Has it never occurred to you to think, with deep and personal interest, of that hour, when all that our best friends can do for us will be, to convey us with suitable decency to the grave,—to cover us with the green turf,—and then to return to the tumult of life, with the same activity and interest as if we had never been. To them the face of nature shall bloom fresh and fair, as it bloomed before; and the full tide of life flow on, as it flowed before; and some pageant shall

again move on, and a busy crowd will follow it with looks of wonder and shouts of applause, till another and another of them drop into the grave, and life, with all its dread responsibilities, shall close upon them for ever.

For life has dread responsibilities when viewed in relation to a life which is to come. Whatever be our situation in this world;—be it high or low;—be it one of ease and affluence, or of labour, poverty, and suffering, it is the one which has been assigned to us by the great Disposer of all things; and every rank and situation has attached to it peculiar duties and peculiar responsibilities, for which we must render a strict account to Him, at the day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, and every man shall be judged according to his works. Amid the bustle and the tumult of life, we are too apt to frame to ourselves excuses for violations of the laws of God, and for the neglect of sacred and important duties; such excuses may satisfy ourselves, and they may sometimes satisfy our fellow-men, but

the solemn question is, whether they will satisfy Him, whose law is holy, and whose justice is inflexible. Were such excuses admitted for the violation of human laws, the whole system of civil society would run into confusion and anarchy. Have we any ground for believing, that the moral government of God will be exercised in a manner which, in regard to human laws, would be reckoned a mockery of justice.

But, besides the actual obedience which we owe to the laws of God, and the actual duties which pertain to our various relations to our fellow-men, there is a most solemn class of responsibilities which belong immediately to ourselves. There is a part within us which shall not die,—an immortal spirit, which must be eternally happy in the presence and enjoyment of God, or eternally miserable under the weight of his righteous displeasure. To every man is committed the solemn trust of seeking to have this immortal being prepared for its appearance before God. It must be the subject of great, and careful, and anxious moral culture, in each

man who is really alive to his high destinies as a moral and immortal being. This culture consists of a discipline within, open only to the eye of him who seeth in secret. By his mercy and his grace, indeed, ample means have been provided, and the all-powerful aid of his Holy Spirit is promised to every one who feels the need of a strength that is not in man; but an essential movement must be in the mind of the individual himself;—leading him to the diligent use of these means, and the earnest and habitual application for this aid,—and, in the whole of this mighty undertaking, the great and solemn responsibility is his own.

With these facts and considerations continually placed before us, and impressed upon our attention, it cannot but strike us as a matter of astonishment that the bulk of mankind seem so little to feel their importance. Engrossed by the cares, anxieties, and business of life,—or occupied by its frivolities and follies, year after year passes over them, and life hastens to its close, while their eager and undivided attention is devoted to pursuits which they are soon to quit for

ever. Thus old age, perhaps, creeps on, and the mind, so long unaccustomed to serious thought, continues to be occupied to the last with the concerns of the passing hour;—or acute disease, it may be, arrests the man in the midst of all the vigour and activity of life; and the truth bursts upon him in a moment, that he is hurrying into an eternal world, while he has made no preparation for the wondrous change, and has scarcely devoted one serious thought to the fearful venture.

There cannot be a question of more intense interest, than what is the cause of this extraordinary and inconsistent conduct. It is simply and primarily to be ascribed to the want of calm and serious thought. Amid the occupations and tumults of life, men do not seriously question themselves what they are,—and what they are doing,—and whither they are going,—and what preparation they are making for the life which is to come. There is nothing which makes so great a difference between one man and another, as the practice of calm and serious thinking. To those who

have been unaccustomed to it, there is required at first an effort, but it is entirely in their own power to repeat this effort if they will, and when they will. It becomes every day easier by perseverance and habit; and the habit so acquired exerts a deep and solemn influence upon their condition as responsible and immortal beings.

In that great process, therefore, in which consists the healthy condition of any man as a moral being, there is a most important step, of which he must be conscious as an exercise of his own mind. You feel that you have here a power, however little you may attend to the exercise of it. You can direct your thoughts to any subject you please;—you can confine them to objects which are before you at the time, or occurrences which have passed during the day;—or you can send them back to events which took place many years ago. You can direct them to persons whom you are in the habit of meeting from day to day, or to those who are separated from you by thousands of miles. You can place before you persons who lived, and events which occurred, long before

you came into existence, and you can anticipate and realize events which are not likely to occur until you have ceased to exist.

Study these wondrous processes of your mind; observe what power you have over them, and consider what consequences of eternal importance must arise from exercising them aright. If you can thus think of any subject you please, why cannot you think of God,—of his power, his wisdom, his holiness, his justice,—of his law which he has written in your heart, and in his revealed word. Why cannot you think of, and realise, the period when you shall lie down in the grave,—and that tremendous moment when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall arise to judgment. Such truths as these, duly considered or thought of, could not fail, under divine influence, to exercise a powerful effect upon all our habits of thinking and acting in this life. To think of and consider them is a process of the mind which it is the imperative duty of every rational being to perform ;—if we neglect it, the guilt,

with all its fearful consequences, is entirely our own.

Cultivate, then, this important power of thinking of "things which are not seen," and consequences of inconceivable moment will result from it both to your happiness and your moral condition, and to your whole habits of feeling and judging respecting the things of this life, and of the life which is to come. Retire often from the tumult of the world, and seriously propose to yourself the questions,—what are my leading objects in this life which is hastening to a close, and what provision am I making for that life which is never to end; —in the exercise of that power which I possess of thinking of whatever I please, what are the subjects which chiefly occupy my thoughts,—what degree of thought am I directing to God and to his law, and to that account which I am soon to render to him; in what degree is my conduct regulated by a sense of his presence and by the authority of his will; to what extent do I make his word the rule of my life, and look to it habitually as the light of my feet

and the lamp of my paths. Am I discharging the various duties which belong to the situation in which I am placed, in a manner which will bear the dread investigation of that day, when I must give an account of myself to God. Am I a parent, have I intrusted to me the sacred charge of beings who, like myself, are destined to an eternal existence; what attention am I devoting to the solemn responsibility of training them for immortality. Let me review my whole course of life, my whole habits of thinking, and the objects and pursuits which chiefly occupy my thoughts and engage my active exertions, and say,—am I living for time, or am I living for eternity.

It is such a course of inquiry as this that determines a man's moral condition. He may read many books, and hear many sermons,—he may become well acquainted with doctrines, and learn to argue acutely on points of faith,—but whatever progress he has made in the knowledge of truth, the great business of life is yet to begin, till he seriously enters on the mental exercise of applying it in this manner

to his own condition in the sight of God, who searches his heart, and who perceives, at a single glance, the whole details of his moral history. It is an exercise which may require little expense of time; in the most laborious and busy life, leisure will be found for it, when there exists a due impression of its supreme importance. When the exercise has grown into a habit, it will mingle itself with the daily concerns of life, and will shed a directing and enlightening influence over them all,—producing a habitual sense of the divine presence, and a uniform reliance on divine direction and aid in every action of life. It was thus that the king of Israel "remembered God upon his bed, and meditated on him in the night watches," and his earnest desire above all earthly things was, that he might "dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple; that is, to live under a constant sense of the presence of God, to contemplate his character and perfections, and to seek the direction of the Almighty in all his ways.

The mind which has been disciplined to this habit of exalted thought, will never be in want of subjects on which it may be exercised. In the works of creation, above, and beneath, and within, it will trace with wonder the wisdom and the power of him who made them all. In the ways of providence it will trace the daily working of his hand, and will learn to cast itself, with filial confidence, on the disposal of him who rules among the children of men. In the word of God, it contemplates him in new and wondrous characters, at once of justice and of mercy, and it finds there a subject of thought which, the more frequently and more closely it is studied, presents features of new and increasing interest. Taken in its more enlarged connexions, it affords a study for the most profound reasoner; while its shortest passages often contain a weight of meaning accessible to the most ordinary understanding, and adapted to every relation of life. We ought, therefore, to read diligently the word of God, and to cultivate the habit of directing our thoughts to the important lessons which may be drawn from it. This is

a mental exercise, highly interesting in itself, and productive of the best effects, both on the tranquillity of our minds, and the regulation of our conduct. It should be accompanied by earnest prayer for the influence of the Holy Spirit, to enlighten our minds in the knowledge of the truth, and to impress it upon our hearts in such a manner, that it may become the regulating principle of our whole character.

The habit of calm and serious thought, which has been the subject of these observations, may become the prevailing or habitual exercise of a duly regulated mind. But there are special seasons of retirement and reflection, which are peculiarly favourable to it, and specially intended for its cultivation. Among these we may reckon the seasons of private and domestic devotion,—and the sacred rest of the Sabbath, that wondrous provision of divine wisdom and mercy for withdrawing us from the concerns of time, and leading our thoughts to the things of eternity. We are too apt to lose sight of the real design and supreme importance of the Sabbath. We are too much disposed to consider

the observance of it merely as a certain duty to be performed, and not to feel aright its unspeakable value, as a period given us for sacred thought,—as a mean of moral culture. Learn, then, to value the Sabbath;—esteem its exercises as the food of the soul,—as that which is intended to nourish you unto eternal life. To those who are laboriously occupied on other days, there is something peculiarly and solemnly valuable in the evening of the Sabbath. You are not fatigued as on other evenings, with the necessary labours of the day;—you have attended public ministrations of religion, which must have left some impression upon your mind, of the things which relate to your everlasting peace. Then is the time to retreat from all intrusion,—to shut your door,—to gather your family around you, and to contemplate yourself and them as passing through a scene of moral discipline to an eternal existence. Lose not the benefit of the precious moments; —take your children to your side,—fold them in the arms of parental affection,—and talk to them of that God who has appointed them

their lot in this world, and from whose all-seeing eye nothing can hide them for a moment. Talk to them of their high destiny as immortal beings,—and of the great provision which is made in the gospel of Christ for the nourishment and growth of the soul. Talk to them of this life which is hastening to a close, and of that eternal life which is never to end;—and point out to them from the word of God, the way to eternal peace. Gather them around you, and kneel before the throne of God,—seek his mercy and his grace,—commit yourself and them to his guidance through life, and to the power of the Holy Spirit to prepare and purify you for the life which is to come. Thus shall you return to the labours, the cares, and the uncertainties of the world, with the high bearing of one who is pursuing a better portion than all that the world can give. Thus shall your habitation be the abode of happiness, of peace, and of love. Thus shall your children rise up to call you blessed. They shall go out from their father's house with impressions upon their minds of "things which

are eternal,"—impressions calculated, by the blessing of God, to preserve them from the evil that is in the world, and to lead them through the labours and anxieties of life as heirs of immortality.

HARMONY OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

AND

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

"And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity." 2 PETER I. 5, 6, 7.

IN the style and composition of the sacred writings, nothing is more remarkable than the manner in which, by a few simple expressions, there is laid before us a detailed and harmonious display of Christian faith, and Christian character. In such expositions, each single word is often found to be a clear and distinct subject of contemplation in itself, while the

combination is arranged with such consummate skill, yet simplicity and clearness, that it becomes at once a study for the philosopher in moral science, and a guide to the most humble Christian in his daily conduct through life. A beautiful example of this nature is furnished by the passage which we have placed at the head of this essay;—and, in its connection with the observations which go before it, taken along with the peculiar relation of its own component parts, it displays the foundation of Christian hope, and affords a delineation of Christian character, in a manner the most harmonious and comprehensive.

This striking exhortation is addressed to those who profess to have received the truth respecting the divine character and atonement of the Messiah, and to rest their hope, in the sight of God, on that great revelation of his mercy and grace which is contained in the gospel of peace. The apostle expresses to them his earnest desire that they may grow in grace and in peace, founded upon the knowledge which they receive, in the gospel, of the cha-

racter of God as it is displayed in his Son; and he strikingly calls their attention to the provisions which are therein held out to them, so adapted to all their spiritual necessities. He reminds them that God has himself provided for them, in the gospel, all that is required for their spiritual life, and for their sanctification to his service; while he has enriched this message of mercy with "great and precious promises," calculated to bring them into a state of conformity to the nature of God, and to preserve them from the evil that is in the world through the degradation of the moral nature of man.

Having thus laid before them the ground of their hope in the sight of God, and the means provided for their progress in the divine life, he goes on to impress upon their attention those qualities of individual character, which every one, who is resting his hope upon this foundation, is called upon to cultivate with the most anxious care, as his great concern to his passage through this scene of moral discipline. He is required to "give all diligenee" in this

great work,—implying that, in the cultivation of this character, there is something to be done by an exercise of the mind itself. This is a truth which we are too apt to lose sight of, while, under a profession of our own weakness, we acknowledge our need of divine aid, but sit still in indolence, and await its coming. True it is, indeed, that without this aid we can do nothing: but it is not an impression which a man may imagine that he feels, and then content himself with the ideal communication. It is a power which acts through the healthy operations of his own mind;—in the exercise of these, endeavouring, as a rational being, to regulate his thoughts and desires by a sense of the divine will, he is encouraged to expect its communication; and it is in feeling these assuming the characters of moral health, that he has the evidence of its actual presence. "Give all diligence," therefore, says the apostle, in the cultivation of those qualities of character, which are the only evidence to yourselves or to others, that you are really interested in the gospel of peace. "Give diligence," he says

again, "to make your calling and election sure." "Work out your own salvation," says another apostle, "with fear and trembling,"—having before you the encouragement of a strength and a might that is not in man, to carry you forward in the great undertaking,—"for God worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure."

A great and important truth which is clearly pointed out in such exhortations, is, that we have a certain power, not only over our conduct, but over the processes of our minds, and the regulation of our thoughts; and that, in the diligent exercise of this power, and a state of mental discipline arising out of it, we are encouraged to look for an influence from God, to enlighten our darkness, to give strength in our weakness, and to make us "more than conquerors" over all the difficulties and dangers which are before us in our progress to an eternal world. The subject is one of deep and extensive interest;—the various important points of consideration which arise out of it could not be expressed in a more striking man-

ner, than in the exhortation of the apostle,—"Giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity."

In attempting a brief illustration of a subject of such extent and importance, the first object of attention which meets us is,—that, in all this exhibition of moral qualities, the primary and fundamental principle is *Faith.* This is at once the source of spiritual life, and the supporting element of moral health; and, until a man be firmly established in this great principle, it is vain for him to expect to make any progress in the cultivation of Christian character. When we thus consider faith as the source, or primary moving cause, essential to the culture of every sound quality of the mind, and to every regulation of individual conduct, we have to view it in two aspects,—in its relation to truths regarding things not

seen,—and more especially and peculiarly in its relation to the offers or promises of the gospel of peace.

In considering the operation of faith in regard to the truths which relate to things not seen, we have to keep in mind the peculiarity of the situation in which we are placed in the present state of existence. In our connexion with the things of the present world, we are surrounded by physical or material objects; with these we communicate by means of our bodily senses; they are continually obtruding themselves upon our attention, with little or no exertion of our own, and therefore they exercise over us a constant and extensive influence. But these are not our only relations: —as moral and responsible agents, as immortal beings, we have to do with objects as real as those which are presented to our senses, though of a very different nature. The truths by which we ought to be influenced, respecting them, are addressed to a different part of our constitution, and are to be received upon a separate kind of evidence. They do not come

under the cognizance of any of our senses, but are addressed directly to the mind; and their due influence upon us is produced through that mental process which we call faith. In the exercise of this important operation of the mind, our first object is, by a process of judgment, to satisfy ourselves of the authenticity of the statements which are thus addressed to us; and this we do by an examination of the evidence on which they rest. When we are thus convinced of their truth, the farther operation of faith is to place them before us in such a manner, that they may exert the same kind of influence over us, as if the things believed were actually seen, or the events expected were taking place in our view. This corresponds with the definition given by the apostle: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;"—that is, faith is that exercise of the mind by which things which are future, but expected to take place, influence us as if they were present,—and things not seen, as if we saw them.

The truths, which it is the office of faith

thus to place before us with all the vividness of present existence, are those which relate to the character and perfections of God,—the great concerns of a world unseen,—and the awful realities of a future judgment, and a state of endless being. When these overwhelming truths are really believed ;—and the thoughts are consequently directed to them in a degree at all proportioned to their momentous importance,—the mind is in the exercise of faith ; and its operation is to keep the truths before us as regulating principles in the mental economy,—and governing principles in the whole character and conduct. It causes them to exercise the same kind of influence over us, as if they were objects of sense —as if the Deity in all the splendour of his attributes were disclosed to our view, or as if we were present at the dread hour in which he shall appear in all his sublime and terrible majesty as a righteous judge.

Now, in this important process of the mind it is impossible not to be struck with the consideration of how much appears to belong to

ourselves, in the exercise of our powers as rational beings. The truths are revealed, and their evidence is before us; but the due attention to them must be entirely our own. It is ours to examine the evidence by which these important truths are supported; and being satisfied of their reality, it is an exercise of our own minds, to direct our thoughts to them in such a manner, or to keep them so before the mind, that they may exert their due influence over our whole character. The man who, in every action of life, thus bears upon his mind a habitual sense of the divine presence, and a realizing impression of an eternal world, is he who lives by faith. Such a character is strikingly contrasted with the conduct of those who live by sense,—who are influenced only by the things which they see around them, and devote their supreme attention to objects and pursuits which they are soon to leave for ever.

Such is the operation of faith in regard to truth; we have next to attend to its agency respecting the offers or promises of the Gospel. This great revelation of peace is addressed to

us as beings in a state of condemnation and of impurity, from which we have no power to deliver ourselves. For the one, it reveals a dispensation of mercy, in which, with perfect consistency with all the attributes of his character, the Deity offers a free forgiveness; for the other, is promised an influence from Himself, capable of renewing the moral nature of man, and of raising him again to the image of God. The benefits thus freely promised, are offered to every one who believes;—and who is he that believes?—he who is convinced of his guilt, and perceives his moral necessities;—who feels that he is incapable of delivering himself from their power; who is satisfied of the efficacy of the offered deliverance,—and confides in the faithfulness or sincerity of him who offers it; this is he who believes;—and through this faith a man is saved;—for, acting upon the impression of the truths thus believed, he asks an interest in these offered blessings, and throws himself upon the faithfulness of God for a participation in the full benefits of redemption.

When, under the influence of the mental impressions which have been thus briefly referred to, a man has been led to seek an interest in the provisions of the Gospel, he enters upon a new course of existence, the leading character of which is,—that it is founded upon, and maintained by faith. Believing his guilt, and confiding in the sincerity of God in a free offer of pardon, he seeks an interest in the blessings of redemption, for his reconciliation to God. Believing his moral depravity and helplessness, he seeks continued communications of grace and strength, for his growing sanctification and his progressive advancement in the divine life. Believing the actual existence of things future and things unseen, he feels upon his mind their habitual influence,—the presence and the perfections of God, and all the realities of an eternal world. Thus he both lives and walks by faith;—his faith is the source of his spiritual life, and it is the great mean of his daily progress.

It is to those who profess to have entered upon this life of faith, that the striking exhor-

tation of the apostle is addressed,—pointing out to them, at once, the graces of the Christian character which they are called upon to cultivate with "all diligence,"—and the means by which they may be enabled to advance with success in this great undertaking.

1. He exhorts them, in the first place, Add to your faith *Virtue.*

The word which is usually translated virtue, is well known to imply, in its original and strict signification, fortitude. In its connexion in this passage, it appears to mean simply a firmness and consistency of mind, in reference to the truths which are the objects of faith,—a determination to contemplate them steadily in all their tendencies,—and a habitual effort to keep them before the mind, so that they may become regulating principles in the whole conduct. It includes, therefore, an earnest endeavour to cultivate that character and conduct which the truths so believed are calculated to produce in every one who really believes them. This is the first great step in that men-

tal exercise which constitutes living by faith; and it cannot be too strongly impressed upon us, how much it is a process of the mind, of which every one must be conscious who really performs it. From the want of it we see such inconsistencies of character in those who profess to believe the most important truths, and who think they believe them. They have, it may be, directed some attention to the evidence of the truths, and have yielded a certain assent of the understanding to their reality,—but this conviction has not been followed up by that necessary process of the mind, which is calculated to bring the truths into practical operation upon the moral condition;—they have neglected entirely the exhortation to add to their faith virtue.

This important exercise of the mind must be in habitual and active operation in him who desires to live by faith. The things of time and sense, with which we are continually surrounded, exert over us a constant influence; and it requires a peculiar and intense direction of the mind, to withdraw us from their power,

and to cause us to feel, as we ought, the influence of events which are future, and of things which are not seen. It requires this exercise to be in a state of peculiar activity, when we are called upon to act under the impression of these future and unseen things, in opposition to present feelings and present interests, and in circumstances, it may be, in which this has to be done by great exertion, and great personal sacrifice. When a man does thus resist the strongest inducements of present things, and sacrifices the strongest personal feelings, propensities, and interests, under simple impressions of things which are future and unseen;—and when he exhibits, in his whole deportment, a character guided by these impressions, to the overcoming of present feelings and personal interests, whenever they happen to interfere with each other,—this is to live by faith,—and this is to add to his faith virtue.

Such, in a remarkable degree, was the conduct of Noah. Warned of God that the world was to be destroyed by water, and instructed to prepare an ark for the preservation of his

household, he promptly commenced this formidable undertaking, and persevered in it through a long course of years, with unshrinking steadiness. During this protracted period, he had not only to undergo much severe labour, but, in the prosecution of it, must have withdrawn himself from many engagements, and denied himself many indulgences which present feelings and interests would have rendered highly desirable. Besides all this, we must suppose, that he had to encounter, day after day, the derision and insults of those around him, added, most probably, to the earnest remonstrances of such as called themselves his friends, against wasting his life in so unprofitable a labour. But these insults, privations, and remonstrances were alike disregarded by this distinguished man of faith, while he endured as seeing Him who is invisible, and persevered in his work, under the firm and undeviating conviction, that what God had said he would certainly perform. Thus does he exhibit a wonderful example of that character which is founded upon and maintained by faith;—and thus has he left

us a striking pattern of acting on his faith with unshrinking determination and fortitude, in opposition to every impulse from present things, —or, in the language of the apostle, of adding to his faith virtue.

And thus will it be with every one who really lives under the power of faith,—that is, who feels upon his mind the due influence of the truths which he believes, respecting things future and unseen. This wondrous principle, when cultivated as the regulating power in the whole character, elevates the man above present feelings,—and carries him into a region where new objects are presented to his view, and pursuits of a new and superior order engage his attention, and meet his enlarged desires. He is raised to "Mount Zion, the city of the living God, to an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect,—to God the judge of all,—and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant,—and to the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel." Thence returning to the humble concerns of the present world, and all

his engagements among perishing things, he feels their unsatisfying character, and learns to pass through them under the habitual impression, that this isnot his rest, nor here his portion. Giving all diligence to add to his faith virtue, it will be his endeavour, by earnest meditation and prayer, to keep the impression of these truths habitually before his view, so that they may alike influence the habits of his mind, and shew this influence in every part of his conduct. The sublime conceptions produced on the mind of such a man, respecting the character of God, will be peculiarly powerful when contemplating him as he is revealed in his Son. In that great message of mercy and of peace, he has been taught to seek his only hope of reconciliation to God,—as well as his only means of making progress in the divine life. Acting under the powerful influence of these great objects of faith, he will derive from them a continual and lively motive to love and new obedience,—knowing that "he is not his own, but bought with a price," and that he is under the most powerful obligations to live, not

to himself, but to him who died for us and rose again. Thus cultivating with anxious care an immediate feeling of the character and perfections of God, the man of faith seeks to keep this impression habitually before him as the directing principle of his life, and to have every emotion and every desire, and consequently every part of his conduct, regulated by a sense of the divine will. All this important process of moral discipline, we must repeat, is closely connected with an exercise of the mind, of which every one must be conscious who really performs it. This consists, as we have seen, in a strong and habitual direction of the thoughts to those truths which are the objects of faith, so that their power shall enter into every feeling of the mind. At first, the exercise may require an effort, and habitual watchfulness may be necessary to prevent the distracting influence of the things of sense. But, like every habit, it becomes easier by repetition and perseverance, until, under the influence of a power that is not in man, it settles down into the uniform, consistent conduct of one, who en-

dures as seeing Him who is invisible,—and, amid the cares, anxieties, and distractions of life, gives all diligence to add to his faith virtue.

That discipline of the mind, which thus brings it under the habitual influence of the truths which are the objects of faith, has well received from the apostle the name of fortitude or virtue. For a high degree of moral courage is required for commencing it, and a high tone of moral determination is necessary for carrying it forward with effect. The first great step towards it, is that most difficult of all exercises of the mind which consists of seriously looking within. It is easy to investigate doctrines, and to weigh evidences; and there is a delightful sense of intellectual vigour in detecting error, and exposing sophistry, and demonstrating the triumph of truth. It is comparatively easy also, and it is delightful to a regulated mind, to rise above the events of ordinary life, and to ascend, in exalted contemplation, to those higher regions, where shine forth in a peculiar manner the divine perfections,—to luxuriate

amid the wonders of creation, the wonders of providence, and, it may be also, the mysteries of grace. But, after the mind has been disciplined to these high pursuits, a more difficult exercise remains,—and that is to look within, and determinedly to press the question respecting our own moral condition, and how far we are under the influence of the truths which we profess to believe. It is to search out the very worst concerning ourselves, and steadily to contemplate the truth so discovered in all its important bearings upon our prospects for eternity. Do I believe the omniscience and omnipresence of him, who is not only the witness of my conduct, but who tries even the thoughts of my heart by the high and holy standard of his law,—then is my moral condition within, such as will bear the inspection of that eye. Do I believe in the solemnities of a coming judgment, in which a strict account shall be required, and the secrets of all hearts revealed; —when my whole moral history is then displayed, and this account required of me,—what shall I answer. Such a course of rigid scrutiny

is the first great step in that moral process, in which consists the health of the soul. When a man has determinedly nerved himself for the work, and has resolved that nothing shall shake him from its stern and rigid accomplishment, this is to add to his faith virtue.

II. That this discipline of the mind, so essential to the health of every moral being, may be conducted upon right principles, it is necessary to pay minute attention to the truth and soundness of those opinions which are thus received as objects of faith, and adopted as regulating principles in the character. Therefore, continues the apostle, to your faith and virtue, add *Knowledge.* This is a consideration of the utmost importance, which, though it may be recognised in theory, is less attended to in practice than it ought to be. Whatever is received as the object of faith must first be presented to the mind as the object of knowledge; that is, it must be received only upon full examination, and upon such evidence as is sufficient to convince the understanding of its truth. Without

this, the professed belief must be either some vague generality, unworthy of the character of truth, or some vision of the mind itself, which leads only to enthusiasm,—it is not faith.

On this subject various errors are committed, but all of them are of serious moment. One of the most common, perhaps, is indifference. Men, who do not profess to misbelieve the great truths relating to things not seen, are at no pains to study and examine them. With what eager attention do we find them applying to interesting questions in politics, trade, or science;—seeking intensely after accurate knowledge, and directing all the energies of their mind towards arriving at the whole truth. But with what coolness do they apply to those inquiries which most of all concern them. In these they are satisfied with some vague and general notions, which perhaps they have been taught in their youth, or which they have adopted from others, without feeling the supreme importance of making themselves fully acquainted with the truth,—of forming distinct and clear opinions, and of perceiving distinctly

the grounds on which these opinions are formed; —of being satisfied whether their belief is consistent with truth, and whether it embraces the whole truth on those great questions in which are involved their hopes and prospects for a life that is to come.

Others affect to disbelieve these great truths, and to consider them, perhaps, as the superstitions of vulgar minds; and they seem to think it a proof of superior understanding to treat them with contempt, or even with ridicule. Do we ask such persons for some account of that long, and laborious, and serious course of inquiry, by which they have arrived at this conclusion on a question of such momentous importance, we must not press them too closely for an answer. We shall find that they have scarcely examined them at all. They have allowed their minds to be carried away by some trivial objection or some fanciful sophism; and truths which received the cordial assent of Newton, and of many others distinguished by understandings of the highest order, are often dismissed by the most frivolous minds as alto-

gether unworthy of belief. This affectation of scepticism is as contemptible as it is melancholy. It is not the result of calm investigation, but the rash decision of a distorted and prejudiced mind, which is turned aside by its own partial views, widely at variance with sound inquiry; or which, misled by its moral condition, has argued itself into the disbelief of what it wishes not to be true. For, in many who have become the victims of vain and sophistical opinions, the will evidently takes the lead in the mental process, and opinions are seized upon with avidity and embraced as truth, which have recommended themselves to previously existing inclinations of the heart. This is a principle in the philosophy of human nature, of most intense and solemn interest. For when the desires of the heart have once departed from a full approbation of the purity of the divine law, the course is easy by which the mind frames for itself a system in accordance with its own disordered inclinations, and, after a certain process, comes to rest in that system as truth. In both cases, the unbelief arises not from deficiency of evidence,

but from a total want of that condition of the mind without which the best evidence has no power,—"if they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

There are persons of a third class, who, professing a sincere love for the truth, wander from it by their own speculations, and by neglecting that calm and deliberate application of the mind which is required for adding to their faith knowledge. It is thus that, in all ages, men have deluded themselves, and led others astray, by putting vague conceptions in the place of truth. To every one who would preserve himself from such delusions, the great and solemn object of inquiry ought to be, upon what ground his opinions have been formed;—have they been deduced from a full and candid investigation,—and do they rest on such evidence as is sufficient to satisfy a sound understanding that they are true. We have an interesting but melancholy picture of human nature, when we endeavour to trace the principles by which minds of a serious character are influenced, in

thus departing from the simplicity of the truth. In some it would appear to arise from a love of singularity, or a desire of appearing wiser than their neighbours; in others, from an ambition to be wise above what is written, accompanied generally with a restless activity of mind and vividness of imagination, while there has been very little cultivation of the judgment. The peculiarity in the mental condition of such persons is, that they look only to one view of a question. Having formed their opinions, probably on slight and feeble grounds, their whole ingenuity is directed to finding arguments in support of them, instead of rigidly examining their truth; and they do not allow themselves to consider fairly the objections, or the views and principles which are opposed to their own. This habit of the mind is usually accompanied with a high confidence in its own powers, and a contempt for those who differ; and the persons who are under its influence generally become, in a great measure, inaccessible to argument, and almost unsusceptible of the force of facts and considerations which are

opposed to their favourite views. This arises from the habit of directing their attention entirely to one view of a subject, or to one side of a question, while they put away from them all that is opposed to it. For when false opinions have once been allowed to fasten on the mind, the evil is not confined to the particular dogma which is embraced; but an injury has been done to the mental economy, which is apt to continue, or even to increase, and to carry the individual more and more deeply into error and delusion. When a man of a certain activity of mind, and energy of character, has thus framed for himself a system differing in some prominent manner from the established opinions of those around him, the facility is equally remarkable with which he finds zealous proselytes. These appear in general, to be influenced by principles similar to those which have been referred to. There is a feeling of intellectual superiority in appearing to think more deeply or more acutely than others; in pursuing discoveries beyond the reach of ordinary minds,—in standing with the enlightened

few, apart from the multitude who are content to tread the beaten path which their fathers trode before them. Such a feeling influences the judgment in a manner which will not be admitted by those who most strongly manifest its power; it does so chiefly by a misdirection of the attention,—that is, by leading them to consider only their favourite system, without paying any regard to the considerations which might show it to be fallacious.

For preserving us from all such perversions of the understanding, and that pernicious influence on the whole moral economy which follows, the only security is in a close attention to the apostle's exhortation, that to faith be added knowledge. For this purpose, the utmost care must be habitually exercised, that the mind be calmly and steadily directed to an examination of the truth, and the utmost anxiety felt to prevent it from wandering into partial views, or speculations guided by favourite fancies. Such is the discipline of a mind which seeks the truth in the love of it; and, in the prosecution of its inquiries, conducted

with humility and candour, it is encouraged to look for an influence from Heaven, which will preserve it from error, and prove to it strength, and light, and wisdom.

Though it thus appears that all true faith must be founded on knowledge, there is a peculiar propriety and beauty in the order in which the mental operations are stated by the apostle,—first faith,—then virtue,—and then knowledge. For, the first step in this great mental process is that frame or disposition of mind, in which it is open to receive the truth in simplicity and candour—to take a full view of all its parts, and to give full weight to all its evidences; and with an earnest determination to apply it to all those purposes which it ought to answer in the regulation of the whole character. When, with such a disposition of mind, the attention is directed to a diligent inquiry after the particular truths, the individual is in that state of discipline in which he is most likely to prosecute the momentous inquiry with success. He is so, according to the established laws of the mind, by which such a sincere and candid love

of truth naturally leads to the discovery of it in every department of knowledge. But, besides this, in the search after divine truth, a special direction is promised to the sincere and humble mind. This appears to be the condition, so often referred to in the scriptures, as receiving the truth "as a little child;" and it appears to be that which is intended by our Lord when he says, "if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrines whether they be of God." Such a man enters on the great inquiry with a deep feeling of its momentous importance, and a sincere and simple desire to discover the whole truth;—and he adds to this an earnest determination to press home each truth to all its consequences on his own moral condition,—to take it as the guide of his life, and the regulating principle in the moral economy of his heart and of his mind;—this is he who adds to his faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge.

The mental attributes which have been referred to in the preceding observations, consist-

ing of faith, virtue, and knowledge, may be considered as those which form the foundation of Christian character; but they are the foundation only, not the real structure of which that character consists. From the consideration of them, therefore, we are naturally led to that influence which they ought to produce upon the moral feelings of the mind, and the regulation of the whole character and conduct, without which, knowledge is vain, and faith is barren. This most important part of the subject is divided by the apostle into two branches; —the one relating to the moral condition of the individual himself, consisting of temperance, patience, and godliness;—the other having respect to his conduct to his fellow-men, in brotherly-kindness and charity. All these qualities are required to be in constant and harmonious operation to constitute a h althy moral condition; and there is either self-deception, or a pretension of what is not really felt, when there is the appearance or profession of some of them without the harmony of the whole. Though a man may show much conduct having the

characters of brotherly-kindness and charity, there is a radical error in the mental economy if these are not founded upon faith and knowledge,—and accompanied by temperance, patience, and godliness. And, whateverdisplay there may be of knowledge, and whatever profession of faith and godliness, these are but empty names, unless they are accompanied by temperance and patience, and lead to brotherly-kindness and charity.

III. Therefore, continues the apostle, as the first great result of your faith, virtue, and knowledge, add *Temperance.*

In ascertaining the precise meaning of such an expression as this, derived from an ancient language, our proper course appears to be, to refer to the meaning affixed to it by ancient writers who wrote in the same language. When we do so, in regard to this expression, we find that the ancient writers on moral science attached great importance to a distinction which they made between temperance and continence. By continence they expressed the mental con-

dition of a man who has irregular desires or inclinations but does not yield to the gratification of them;—by temperance, the condition of him whose desires and inclinations themselves are under due regulation and control. When we assume this, therefore, as the ancient and precise meaning of the term, a subject is opened to us of great extent and supreme importance;—the discipline of the heart. It is most appropriately placed where it stands in the enumeration of moral qualities before us, as the first step in that great moral process, in which consists the health of the soul. Faith, virtue, and knowledge are the means,—and these constitute mental exercises which may be called intellectual. Brotherly-kindness and charity, again, express attributes of character in a man's conduct towards his fellow-men. But between these there is placed a class of moral qualities, in which consists his own sound condition as a moral being,—and on which depends the aspect in which he is viewed in the sight of Him who "looketh on the heart;"—these are enumerated by the apostle under the heads of

temperance, patience, and godliness. Among the three classes of qualities, however, there is a close and most important relation. Faith, virtue, and knowledge, we have seen, are connected with processes of the mind, over which we have a certain degree of voluntary power, and in the due exercise of them much depends upon this power being exerted in a steady and persevering manner. The result of this is to bring us under the agency of certain truths, relating to things not seen, which have a direct tendency, under divine influence, to produce most important effects upon the moral condition of our own minds and hearts. When this great end has been accomplished, a certain conduct and character follow, not by any distinct and separate effort, but as a natural and indispensable consequence:—the tree being made good, the fruit will be good,—the fountain being purified, the water will be pure.

The consideration of temperance, therefore, leads us to a subject of the deepest importance, —the regulation of the heart;—the cultivation of a pure and healthy state of the desires, af-

fections, and dispositions of the mind, those principles within, from which our external conduct and character proceed. "Keep thy heart," says an inspired writer, "with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

The subject must be one of supreme importance in the estimation of every man who feels what that is which constitutes a state of moral purity in the eye of God. Man can judge of man by his external character alone, but "the Lord looketh on the heart;" and there may be much of irregular desire, unsubdued passion, and impure imagination within, which are not allowed to shew themselves in the conduct. There are various principles by which this may be accounted for. In restraining the conduct of men, much is done by the influence of human laws,—much by a regard to health and interest,—and much more still by our regard to the opinions of other men, our desire of their approbation and esteem, our fear of their contempt, indignation, or anger;—very much by a regard to character, a principle of most extensive operation with all

descriptions and classes of men. There may even be a certain operation of conscience, or a conviction of what is morally right and wrong, contending with an unsound inclination within, and restraining the outward conduct, while the desire is still cherished, and the envious passion, or impure imagination, still holds its place in the heart. But, if we really believe that every desire and imagination of the heart is open to the eye of God, we cannot for a moment suppose that this can be in his estimation a sound moral condition. To constitute moral purity, the heart must be pure; the desires and inclinations of the mind, and our affections or dispositions towards God and towards man, must, equally with our external conduct, be regulated by the indications of conscience, and by a supreme regard to the divine will. The habitual direction of the thoughts should be such as recognises the inspection of infinite purity. When the Psalmist, accordingly, prays the Eternal One to scrutinize minutely his moral condition, it is by saying, "Search me and know my heart, try me and know my

thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

But a mind, which is not the slave either of impure desire or malignant passion, may be devoted to pursuits which relate only to present things,—to wealth,—to power,—to distinction,—or may be allowed to waste itself in the mere frivolities and trifles of the passing hour. A sound condition of the heart and of the mind requires not only the absence of unsound and irregular emotions, but the careful culture of those which are worthy of our high destiny as immortal beings. It leads us to seek after spiritual blessings and moral acquirements,—to "set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth;" it calls us to the cultivation of kind and benevolent feelings towards men, and of love, submission, and devotedness towards God,—of a habitual desire to feel the impression of his presence, and to have every action of life, and every desire and emotion of the mind, regulated by the sense of his holiness and purity. It leads us to direct our minds, with a suitable de-

gree of attention, to the various duties and responsibilities which belong to the particular situation in which we are placed, and the means and opportunities of usefulness which are committed to us; our high responsibilities as parents and as children,—as masters or servants,—as subjects, as neighbours, and friends,—as possessed of talents which ought to be devoted to the glory of God,—or of wealth, in regard to which we must render to him a strict account of our stewardship:—And finally, it leads us to feel all the deep responsibility of that culture of the soul, which alone can qualify and prepare it for the enjoyment of God.

The cultivation of a state of mind which feels, as it ought, such impressions as these, is closely connected with a most important principle in our mental constitution,—the power which we have over the regulation and direction of our thoughts. We feel that we possess such a power, however imperfectly we may exercise it. We can direct the thoughts to any subject we please; we can continue them intensely directed to it, so as to follow out the

train of thinking to which it gives rise; and we can vary or dismiss it at our will. But this requires a certain effort, especially in those who have been little accustomed to close and serious thinking. Without this effort, we leave the mind to be occupied only with passing events, or to frame for its own amusement vain delusions and phantoms of the imagination, no better than dreams, and as unprofitable. The due control and regulation of this power over our thoughts lies at the foundation of all true mental culture, and there is nothing that makes a more essential difference between one man and another than a due regulation of the thoughts, and the subjects to which they are habitually directed. In all men, indeed, there are various subjects to which the thoughts must be directed in the ordinary concerns of life; and these must occupy a great degree of attention in persons who may differ widely from each other in the regulation of the mind. But there are, to all, seasons of leisure from these concerns, in which the mind seeks relief in some other occupation. It is then that a

man may read in his own thoughts both his intellectual and his moral condition: and if he then attend to the habits of his mind, with an earnest desire to know the truth, he will find a monitor within which will never deceive him.

It is true, indeed, that a due regulation of the thoughts does not alone constitute a sound moral condition; but they are closely and immediately connected. Correct and pure moral emotions towards God, and a pure and healthy state of moral feeling in our own mental discipline in general, are conditions of the mind over which we have not a direct control; that is, we cannot call them up at our will. But, by the constitution of the mind, they are the natural result of certain truths, and they are called forth by a proper direction of the attention to those truths, so that their natural effects may be produced upon the moral feelings. In making this statement, we lose not sight of the important fact, that the influence of the Spirit of God is required to bring home these truths with effect to a mind which has never felt their power. But we abuse this important

doctrine, when we talk of it in a manner which turns aside our view from the power which we possess over our own minds, and the deep and solemn responsibility which attaches to every man in the due exercise of it;—the deep guilt which may be incurred by a neglect of adequate attention to the truths which are calculated to influence the moral condition of the mind, and, through it, to regulate the whole character. However much we want the inclination to exercise it, we feel that we have the power. We can direct our thoughts intensely and seriously to God,—can contemplate his power and wisdom, his purity and his holiness, and all the solemnities of an eternal world and a judgment to come. We can consider seriously the various responsibilities and duties which belong to our own condition in life, and can rigidly question ourselves, whether we are discharging them in a manner which will bear the light of an eternal day. We can, in the same manner, look within, and strictly question ourselves respecting our moral condition in the sight of Him who searches our hearts, and

knows our inmost thoughts. We can thus cherish trains of thinking which have a tendency to promote correct feelings of the mind, and we can avoid or banish such as have an opposite tendency. We can study with diligence the word of God, and contemplate deliberately and carefully the various important truths which are there disclosed to us, and their tendencies both for the regulation of our minds and the guidance of our conduct. This process of the mind, indeed, requires a steady and persevering effort, and unceasing watchfulness: and every one who seriously enters upon the great undertaking will feel continually his own weakness, and his need of a power that is not in himself. But, while he humbly and earnestly seeks for this almighty power to enlighten his darkness, and, in his weakness, to give strength, let him not forget the part which is his own,—let him not lose sight of the full import of the apostle's exhortation, calling upon him to "give all diligence," that to his faith, virtue, and knowledge, he may add temperance.

IV. From the whole mental condition which has been referred to in the preceding observations, another naturally arises, which, in fact, is nearly allied to it;—to temperance must be added *Patience.* This, considered as a quality of individual character, seems to imply a state of mind which may be viewed in its important influence, both in reference to God, and to our relations to our fellow-men. In reference to God, it implies not only a submission to, but a cordial acquiescence in, the dispensations of his providence, as parts of a system carried forward by infinite wisdom, and calculated to answer important purposes in his great scheme of moral government. It leads us thus to rest in the absolute conviction, that the whole economy of providence is one great and magnificent system of design, and order, and harmony. The mental tranquillity arising from this conviction will be felt, both in relation to our own concerns, and to those which are going on in the world around us. In regard to the former, it leads us to rest in a sense of our being in the hand of a Father, infinite in wis-

dom as in goodness and mercy, who has appointed us the place we are to occupy in this state of moral discipline,—and in the assurance that it is the one best suited to promote his purposes, and our own eternal good. We are thus taught to consider the peculiar duties which belong to our lot, and how we may best glorify God in it, rather than to compare it with the lot of others, and thus discover sources of discontent. Even the anxieties and troubles of life we are taught to regard with similar feelings, knowing that, if used as a mean of moral discipline, they are conducive to our highest improvement,—that tribulation, viewed and improved in this manner, "worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and that this hope maketh not ashamed." The peace arising from this condition of the mind should also be experienced in reference to the events which are taking place in the world around us. Though "the heathen should rage, and the people imagine a vain thing," it directs us to a hand which controls their movements; and, even when events assume their most alarming

aspect, we are still led to contemplate the operation of that hand with humble confidence, and to rest in the assurance that "the Lord reigneth."

The mental condition, which is referable to patience, has also a most important relation to a man's intercourse with his fellow-men. It is nearly synonymous with meekness, and closely allied to humility, and all the graces of character which spring from it. It leads a man to form a moderate estimate of his own rights and pretensions, and to take the most enlarged estimate of the rights and feelings of other men. It leads him to be slow to take offence,—to put the best construction on the conduct and motives of others,—to seek peace, and often to submit to injuries rather than violate it. Such a disposition has its reward in itself;—the man who possesses it passes quietly through life, borne far above all its lesser disturbances and evils, by his habitual sense of those great concerns which relate to the life which is to come.

V. In this striking enumeration of the qualities of Christian character, we have seen that

temperance and patience relate to the internal moral condition of the man. But there is most appropriately placed in immediate connexion with them that mental exercise by which they are promoted and cherished. Faith, virtue, and knowledge are of no value, unless they be productive of temperance and patience, —but these essential qualities cannot be maintained in growth and progress without *Godliness.* Wherefore, says the apostle, to your temperance and patience add godliness.

We read in scripture of those who live without God in the world,—that is, without any impression of his character,—without any sense of his presence,—without any regard to his law, —without any gratitude for his goodness,— and without any feeling of their dependence upon him both for mercy and for spiritual strength. We read of others, who think of God as such an one as themselves,—that is, bringing down his high and holy attributes to a conformity with their own degraded moral feelings. The state of mind, here designated by the term godliness, seems to be that which

is opposed to both these conditions. It implies forming high and worthy conceptions of the divine character,—and habitually cherishing these as the regulating principle of our own moral condition. The attributes of God indeed are far above our full comprehension. They are higher than heaven, what can we do;—they are deeper than hell, what can we know;—the measure of them is longer than the earth and broader than the sea;—who by searching can find out God. But, from his works, and from his word, we can derive such knowledge of him as is sufficient for all the purposes of our guidance, direction, and comfort, in this our state of moral discipline. From his works around us we trace his power and wisdom, and should learn to bow in humble adoration before him who called all things into being by his word, and maintains them all in undeviating harmony. From the moral impressions of our own minds, or, in other words, in the light of conscience, we may read his perfections as a being of infinite holiness, and righteousness, and truth. All these impressions are confirmed

and illustrated by his revealed word, where, in addition to those great and overwhelming attributes of his character, we learn his perfections as a God of love,—long-suffering and slow to anger,—not willing the death of a sinner, but that he turn from his wickedness and live. We learn the wondrous provision which he has made for the recovery of his lost creatures; and are led to throw ourselves before his throne of mercy, seeking his pardon, and his grace to help us in every time of need; seeking that strength which he has promised to every one that asks it, to carry us forward in our state of trial and discipline, and to prepare and purify us for the immediate enjoyment of himself.

He who feels upon his mind such impressions of the divine character, and cultivates them in a manner in any degree adequate to their supreme importance, will naturally seek after intercourse with God,—will desire to feel the influence of his continual presence,—and to cherish the sense of his holiness as the regulating principle of the character, and even of the desires and imaginations of the heart. He

will find increasing delight in contemplating the perfections of God. He will desire to commit himself, with filial confidence and love, to the disposal of his heavenly Father, and to make his will the habitual rule of his whole conduct;—he will look to his mercy as the only ground of safety, and to his grace as the only source of spiritual strength, and the only means of progress in those great concerns which pertain to an immortal being. Thus will he "dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life,—to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."

The disposition of mind which we have thus considered, as being included under the term godliness, may be the habitual exercise of the duly regulated mind. But there are certain special means by which it is encouraged and promoted; and the chief of these is prayer. Not that the Eternal Omniscient One requires to be informed either of our wants or our desires. All our necessities are better known to him than they are to ourselves; and the most secret thoughts and inclinations of the heart are naked

and open before him. But he has specially appointed the exercise of prayer as a mean of communication with himself, and through which he is pleased to dispense the blessings of his grace. In addition to these considerations, the exercise of prayer is calculated to bring a special and peculiar benefit to ourselves. In the midst of our ordinary engagements in life, indeed, we may elevate the soul to God; but, surrounded by the distractions of external things, this must be done in a partial and unsatisfactory manner. Our feeble and imperfect nature, so much under the influence of the objects of sense, requires every possible aid to enable us to feel the due impression of the things of faith. It requires usto withdraw from external things, and in solitude and silence, and by solemn acts of devotion, to bring ourselves, as it were, into the immediate presence of God. There is a power in the mind by which it thus brings down upon itself an influence from the inner sanctuary, a special impression of the perfections of that incomprehensible One, who is thus disclosed to us, as if by his more immediate

presence. We realize his omniscient eye, and stand in awe under the truth, that he understandeth our thoughts afar off. We feel the impression of his holiness, and bow beneath the sense of our own depravity and guilt. We feel the influence of his love, and throw ourselves upon his mercy. We commit ourselves to his grace to supply all our wants out of his fulness,—to conduct us in safety through the dangers, the difficulties, and the evils of life, and to carry us forward in the course which leads to eternal peace. Would we seek to feel our own moral condition, and to fix the deep impression of an inquiry of such eternal importance, we cannot use a mean of greater efficacy, than putting it into words in the presence of Him to whom it is better known than it is to ourselves. Is there any mental or moral habit which we feel to have acquired a mastery that puts in peril the safety of the soul,—we cannot assail it in a more efficient manner, than by fully confessing it before Him who seeth in secret, and asking from him a might which alone is able to rescue us from its power. Such

is the province, and such the efficacy of prayer. It maintains our intercourse with things which are not seen. It is the life, the strength, and the nourishment of the soul; and it will be diligently cultivated, not as a mere duty to be performed, but as a mean of spiritual life, by every one who feels the deep import of the truth, that all the graces of the Christian character must be founded upon and supported by godliness.

VI. The mental condition, which has been referred to in the preceding observations, does not waste itself in monkish solitude, or in the exercise of sublime contemplation. It tends at once to lead the man who is the subject of it to the relation in which he stands to his fellow-men, and to the various important duties which belong to the situation in which he is placed. While it leads him to seek after purity of heart, it also produces a character and conduct calculated to promote the good of others,—the happiness and comfort of all those with whom he may be brought into contact,

in his passage through this state of trial and discipline. Following out this, as the natural or necessary result of a healthy moral condition within, the apostle next inculcates, that to temperance, patience, and godliness, is to be added *Brotherly-kindness.* This seems to include the highest exercise of all those affections which bind man to his fellow-men; leading us to feel towards each other as brethren,—to study the wants of others,—to enter into their feelings, and, in as far as we have power, to relieve their distresses. It tends to promote a conduct distinguished not only by the highest degree of integrity, but by habitual complaisance, sympathy, and kindness; and this is not to be regulated by the condition of men as to the things of this world, but by the high and broad principle, that, whatever may be their lot as to external things, they are the children of the same Almighty Father with ourselves, inheriting the same nature, possessed of the same feelings, and soon to enter on the same state of eternal existence, when all the distinctions which exist in this world shall cease

for ever. It thus leads us to bring ourselves, as it were, to the same rank and the same situation with them, and with a brotherly interest to view their wants and their feelings as if they were our own. The principles of conduct, which arise from this interchange of tender affections, are applicable to every situation of life, and to all those exercises of justice, benevolence, forbearance, and friendship, which may be called forth by our various relations to our fellow-men. It sets aside those artificial distinctions by which, on the principles of the world, men are kept at such a distance from each other; and it sets aside, what is more powerful still, the principle of selfishness, by which men are made so acutely alive to every thing that concerns their own wants and their own feelings, and so cool in what relates to the wants and the feelings of others. It goes farther still; for, according to the sublime maxims of the gospel, it teaches us even to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do good to them who despitefully use us. The benevolence of the gospel thus raises us above

the highest principles to which we are led by the mere feeling of human kindness;—it leads us to do good to the evil and the unthankful, and this is impressed upon us by the highest of all motives,—the imitation of him who is the Giver of all good. Such a character is exemplified, in the most striking manner, in the whole life of Him, who for us, and for our salvation, humbled himself and became a man of sorrows. He humbled himself that he might mingle with mankind,—that he might enter into their wants,—that he might know their feelings, —that, having suffered being tempted, he might succour them that are tempted. He has left us an example that we should follow his steps; and he has left us precise instructions respecting the course by which this may be done, and the objects whom he has specially committed to our care. These are the hungry, the naked, the stranger, the sick, and the prisoner. He has even left us the solemn intimation, that, at the last and great day of account, our moral condition will be estimated by the actual influence which has been habitually

manifested on our relations to our fellow-men, as done from a principle of love to him and of devotedness to his service. While we retire, therefore, from the power of external things, and devote ourselves to the high undertaking which relates to the culture of the moral being within, while we feel the supreme importance of cultivating temperance, patience, and godliness, as the qualities which are essential to our own moral condition, let us constantly bear in mind, that the direct tendency of these is to lead us forth to our fellow-men, to seek them in their hour of need, to minister to their wants, to relieve their distresses, to instruct the ignorant, to reclaim the wanderer, to soothe the wounded spirit. For this exalted exercise wealth is not necessary; the humblest of those who breathe the spirit of the Redeemer, may shew much kindness and do much good to others as humble as themselves.

But it is not in the abodes of poverty and deprivation alone that the kindly feelings of the heart may be called into exercise. In every situation of life we may find openings

for deeds of kindness. In every rank, and in every relation, this disposition will manifest itself by gentleness and forbearance, by leading us to study the feelings and consult the wants and the desires of others, whether superiors, equals, or dependants; by repressing selfishness, and by producing the habit of placing ourselves in the situation of others, so as to make their feelings and circumstances our own. Hence arise the sympathies and exertions of Christian friendship, and the habit of sacrificing personal feelings and selfish interests, with all that interchange of the kindly affections which diffuses happiness and comfort wherever it is exercised. To all such exercise of those affections which bind man to his fellow men, the great principle of Christian duty gives a strength, stability, and permanence which never can arise from any lower source. For, much active benevolence may, and does arise from motives of an inferior kind, and from certain feelings of our nature, from which there results an actual and peculiar enjoyment in the discharge of offices of

sympathy and kindness. Much real enjoyment arises from doing good to those whom we esteem and love; and from relieving the distresses of the virtuous and worthy. There is an actual reward in the return of gratitude, and in sentiments of respect and affection from those whom we have made to feel a weight of obligation which they cannot expect to repay. There is something more directly personal, or selfish, in exciting the love and gratitude of those who may be able to return our kindness, and feel the most anxious desire to do so; and, in regard to cases of both descriptions, there is a separate and peculiar enjoyment, or actual reward, in the approbation of other men, especially those whom we respect, and in the general sentiments of regard and esteem which follow the man who makes himself known by deeds of disinterested and active benevolence. But the great principle of Christian duty carries us farther and higher; it calls upon us to do good to the evil and the unthankful, and to do it in secret, looking not for any return, whether of good offices, approbation, or gratitude,

but simply to the love and devotedness which we owe to Him who is the giver of all good. This, accordingly, is the important distinction so strikingly referred to in the word of God; "If ye love them that love you, what reward have ye; do not even the publicans the same. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye;—for sinners also do even the same. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you. That ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Such is the great principle, enjoined by the apostle, of brotherly-kindness. That it may hold its true place in the economy of a mind which is under the influence of faith, it must arise from no partial or selfish motives, no mere exercise of incidental feeling, nothing that has respect either to our own emotions, or to the opinions of other men. It must be a steady, consistent

principle, pure in its origin, and uniform in its influence; it must be founded on faith and knowledge, and cherished by temperance, patience, and godliness,—the willing service of filial affection,—a steady persevering course of active usefulness, influenced simply by the high spirit of love and devotedness to him who has redeemed us to God by his blood.

Go then, ye who profess to serve this divine Master, go, and follow his steps. Deny yourselves the selfish indulgences of those who know no better portion; go forth in search of those who are in want of your kindness; search out the hungry, the naked, the sick, the stranger, the prisoner;—visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction. Realize that eye which follows you in all your wanderings among the abodes of misery, disease, and suffering. Realize continually that high principle of active usefulness which flows from affection to him who died for you; and realize continually the value which he will assign to such a course of active exertion, not indeed as a

ground of acceptance, but as a test of devotedness and love, "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

VII. The exercise of deeds of benevolence and kindness does not alone constitute that character towards our fellow-men which is the true and proper result of a sound moral condition. That state of the mind and of the heart which is founded on faith, and cherished by temperance, patience, and godliness, will extend its influence over all those feelings and affections which refer to others, in every relation of life. The condition of mind which thus arises appears to constitute that which the apostle inculcates, when to brotherly-kindness he calls upon us to add *Charity*. This must be considered as claiming our deep and serious attention, when it is here given as the finishing quality of that character which is founded upon, and maintained by, a habitual principle of devotedness to God. The feelings which are included under it are enumerated by the apos-

tle Paul, and are by him referred to the following heads. (1 Cor. xiii)

1. *It suffereth long and is kind:* It exercises candour, indulgence, and forbearance in regard to the conduct of others, entering into their feelings with gentleness and kindness, and making every allowance for the circumstances in which they are placed, and the motives and feelings by which they are influenced. This disposition prevents us from hastily assigning unworthy motives or bad intentions; it induces us to take the most favourable view, that we possibly can, of the conduct of other men, and, even when appearances are against them, to endeavour anxiously to discover favourable views and palliating circumstances. It thus leads us to be slow to take offence, to be unwilling to consider injuries as intended, to be above taking offence at trifles, and, under real injuries, to be easily conciliated and ready to forgive. This temperament of the mind is strikingly contrasted with one which we find so common in the world,—envious,

suspicious, and censorious,—ready to be offended by trifles, to construe accidental circumstances into intended insults, and to impute to others bad intentions on the most frivolous grounds. Such a disposition is a source of wretchedness to those who are under its power, and of unhappiness to all with whom they are connected; and we cannot survey the distress which arises from ill-regulated temper, without perceiving how much the present happiness of men would be increased by the exercise of that charity which suffereth long and is kind.

The kindness, which is here associated with long-suffering, seems to be distinct from the exercises of benevolence referred to under the former division of the subject. It appears to imply more particularly a tender regard to the feelings of others, which makes us studious to avoid wounding them by jealousies and suspicions, by peevishness or fretfulness, and by allowing trifles to ruffle the temper and disturb the social harmony. Many, who are not deficient in deeds of benevolence or friendship, are apt to forget how much the exercise of true

kindness consists in gentleness, meekness, and tender consideration for the feelings of others; and it is melancholy to observe how much real unhappiness often exists in families and in communities, which would be effectually prevented by the Christian grace of kindness.

2. *Charity envieth not.* Envy looks with displeasure on the real or imagined happiness of others, leading men to compare their own situation with that of their neighbours, and to covet circumstances in their lot which seem to render it happier than their own. It is thus founded on discontent, a state of mind decidedly opposed to sound Christian feeling; for this teaches us to consider our lot, in all its circumstances, as assigned to us by the great Disposer of all things, and precisely adapted to the place which it is his pleasure we shall hold in this state of moral discipline. Envy, therefore, is not only injurious to a sound state of feeling towards other men, but is also destructive of our own moral culture. For it tends to withdraw our attention from our actual condition

as responsible beings,—leading us to forget, amid fruitless longings after imagined good, the high responsibilities which pertain to our own condition, and thus to waste the precious hours which are given us to prepare for the life which is to come. Christian charity, therefore, teaches us to rejoice in the good of others, —in their happiness, their honour, and their reputation. It is opposed to detraction,—and leads us to allow to other men, though rivals, or even enemies, all praise, honour, and reputation that are justly due to them,—to avoid every thing calculated to injure their good name, or to lower them in the public estimation,—and to defend them against such attempts when we find them made by others.

3. In the exercise of that correct state of moral feeling which we owe to other men, we are very much impeded by the false and exaggerated views which we are apt to form of our own importance, and the undue weight which we attach to our own feelings. In opposition to this, Christian charity leads us to view our-

selves with humility, and this naturally induces us to view others with indulgence, candour, and justice. Accordingly, the apostle adds, "*Charity vaunteth not itself,—is not puffed up.*" The immediate and natural result of this humble, calm, and considerate view of our own condition and our own feelings, in reference to those of other men, is a general propriety and decorum of behaviour towards them,—"*doth not behave itself unseemly.*" A man acting under the influence of this law of Christian charity conducts himself with a correct and judicious regard to the situation of life in which he is placed; he does not push himself into notice, or prefer himself to others; but is, in all circumstances of life, to his superiors respectful, —to his equals accommodating and courteous, —to his inferiors, kind, gentle, and considerate. He is thus preserved from those improprieties and absurdities into which men are led by pride and vanity,—putting themselves out of their proper place, and losing sight of the proprieties of conduct adapted to their situation,—involving themselves with

matters in which they have no concern ; and, by a disposition restless, meddling, and conceited, at once destroying their own peace, and injuring the peace of others.

4. The propensity in human nature which has the chief influence in separating man from man, and disturbing all the harmonies of life, is *Selfishness.* By one device or another men are ever seeking to promote their own interest, —their own gratification,—their own ease, reputation, or distinction. Hence arise the jealousies, suspicions, and envies with which they view those who are likely to interfere with them in their favourite pursuits, and those who in similar pursuits have been more fortunate than themselves. Christian charity strikes at the root of this propensity, so wide in its extent, so destructive in its influence ;—"*charity seeketh not her own.*" It would lead us into a field far too extensive for our present purpose, were we to endeavour to trace the manner in which selfishness enters into all our pursuits, and the extent to which it interferes with that

spirit of kindness to our fellow-men to which so much importance is attached in the great practical rules of the gospel of Christ. Every one has only to watch minutely his own conduct, to discover, in how many instances a regard to his own interest, comfort, or distinction interferes with the kindly feelings and the offices of kindness which he owes to others,—how often he is prevented by mere indolence, or a selfish regard to his own ease, from doing good in various ways which would cost him nothing but a little exertion ;—how often a regard to his own feelings interferes with what is due to the feelings of other men ;—and how different the conduct of all of us would very often be, did we deliberately place ourselves in the situation of others, and calmly view their circumstances and their feelings, as if they were in our situation and we in theirs. There is not, in the high requirements of the gospel, a principle of more essential importance than this. When our Lord says, " if any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself,"—he calls us not to mortifications or austerities calculat-

ed only to inflict suffering on ourselves:—but he calls us, and he calls us "as one having authority," to renounce all those selfish indulgences and selfish humours, and that pursuit of selfish interest, which interfere with the zealous and extensive exertions for the comfort and the good of others, to which he attaches so important a place as a test of our affection to him, and our devotedness to his service. In such a course he has left us a bright example, and he calls us to follow his steps. He calls us to enter with kindly interest into the wants and feelings of our brethren, and, in many instances, to sacrifice our own interest, ease, indulgence, and inclinations to theirs. By the high sanction of his own example, we are exhorted to have the same mind in us which was also in him;—and this exhortation is enforced by the solemn denunciation, that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

5. The mind that is under the influence of Christian charity "*is not easily provoked, and*

it thinketh no evil." Like its divine Master it is meek and lowly, not apt to be offended by trifles, and, under real injuries, patient and forgiving. It is slow and cautious in forming an unfavourable opinion of others, or in imputing to them bad designs or bad intentions: and consequently, it is not apt, as so many are, to conjure up to itself imaginary injuries and imaginary enemies. That mental condition, which we usually distinguish by the names of meekness, quietness, and magnanimity of mind, is equally conducive to a man's own comfort, and to the sound state of his moral feelings towards other men. It carries with it its own reward in the tranquillity which it brings to us in our passage through this scene of tumult and strife. While it is peculiarly favourable to the culture of the moral being, it tends also to preserve from numerous evils, mortifications, and distractions to which the opposite character exposes.—"Learn of me," says our Lord, "for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls."

6. This catalogue of Christian graces is strikingly concluded by a reference to that great and broad principle of Christian feeling, which lies, in a great measure, at the foundation of the whole,—"*charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.*" Viewing himself, and all around him as immortal beings in their passage to an eternal world, the man of charity has for his first and great anxiety respecting his fellow men to see them walking in the truth,—to find among them the culture of those qualities which mark the healthy condition of the moral being, and its preparation for the solemn realities of an eternal world. When brought into comparison with those great concerns, all present things sink into insignificance. He can derive, therefore, no satisfaction from moral evil, even though it may contribute to his own benefit, as, in the transactions of life, it may often do. For how often may it happen that we derive advantage from the misconduct of rivals, and may be tempted to feel a secret satisfaction at the loss of character on the part of those who perhaps have stood in the

way of our favourite pursuits, either of interest, reputation, or comfort. How often might we turn to our advantage the quarrels of others, and thus be tempted to foster rather than to heal the feelings from which they arose. But whatever personal benefit he might derive from it, the man of charity cannot view with satisfaction what is displeasing to God, or destructive of the moral condition of an immortal being; and he will gladly sacrifice his own present feelings and present advantage, for the high achievement of rescuing a soul from death. In this great object he will exert himself to instruct the ignorant,—to reclaim the vicious,—to win even his enemies by deeds of kindness,—to prevent differences,—to heal divisions,—and to bring together as brethren those who have assumed the attitude of hatred and defiance. Feeling in himself all the supreme importance of "things not seen," it will be his habitual and earnest desire to promote among all around him a character and conduct governed by a sense of the overwhelming interest of a life that is to come.

7. The enumeration of those qualities of the mind which constitute Christian charity, is recapitulated by the apostle, in four expressions of a most comprehensive character; "*it beareth all things; believeth all things; hopeth all things; endureth all things.*" The first of these expressions would have been more properly rendered, "covereth all things;" and when they are taken together, they display in a few words the great peculiarities of that conduct and character towards our fellow-men, which ought to arise out of the gospel of Christ. The man who is under its influence seeks to cover the faults of other men, to defend them against misrepresentation or calumny,—and, in all his relations towards men, to treat them with meekness, forbearance, and kindness. He is disposed to form the most favourable opinion of others that circumstances will at all allow, and, when personally injured, to give the utmost possible weight to concessions or explanations,—to be easily conciliated and ready to forgive. This justice and indulgence which he applies to the conduct of men he extends

also to their opinions, giving to their sentiments and statements a fair, calm, and attentive hearing, and judging of them with impartiality and candour. Farther, in regard to the character of other men, he does not, without great cause, depart from the favourable opinion of what may be done for their improvement, but takes advantage of every hopeful circumstance, and is thereby encouraged to persevere in his efforts to do them good. In the prosecution of this high design, he puts up with much waywardness, absurdity, and folly, on the part of those whom he seeks to benefit,—not considering his own comfort or honour, but the great object which he has in view is the good of others; and in this he perseveres with constancy, however unpromising the circumstances may appear as to his ultimate success, or however unproductive of comfort to himself in the prosecution of them.

Such, then, is the exercise of the kindly feelings towards our fellow-men, which is represented as indispensable to that character which is founded on faith, virtue, and know-

ledge, and cherished by temperance, patience, and godliness. The importance attached to it in the word of God cannot be represented more strikingly than in the words of the apostle, where he teaches us, that without it knowledge is vain and faith is barren; and that all acquirements and endowments, however high their pretensions, are but an empty sound, which can never profit. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. . . . . And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three, but the greatest of these is Charity."

The whole subject, thus briefly and imper-

fectly delineated, is full of important instruction, which, in an especial manner, claims the attention of two descriptions of persons.

I. Are there those who maintain, that the doctrines of the Gospel are unfavourable to morality, because they offer acceptance in the sight of God to faith alone. Let such put away from them those flimsy and distorted conceptions of Christian truth, by which they voluntarily delude themselves. Let them look at the record of God, in all its harmony and consistency, —in all its extent and all its purity. Let them see it requiring a higher tone of morals than ever was contemplated in the most exalted of human standards,—let them see it enjoining, as an indispensable part of Christian morality, all those dispositions and actions towards our fellow-men, which are included under the comprehensive terms of brotherly-kindness and charity. Let them contemplate it as extending its high and pure requirements even to the thoughts, desires, and inclinations of the heart;—and demanding purity within. Let

them consider calmly and deliberately these important truths, and say, as candid and honest men, what estimate they form of the morality of the gospel.

II. Let those who profess to be under the influence of the truths which are the objects of faith, see that they truly feel and really manifest their power. It is easy to assume the phraseology of religion;—it is easy to acquire a knowledge of its doctrines, and to argue acutely and ingeniously on points of faith. It is not difficult to practise, with decorum, its rites and forms, to observe its ordinances, and to shew all that zeal for the externals of religion by which a man acquires a certain character among his fellow-men. It is easy, also, to those who have the means, and it is gratifying to feelings which exist in the generality of mankind, to practise much benevolence, and to shew much real concern for alleviating the distresses of other men. But much of all this, it is to be feared, may and does exist,

while there is none of that discipline of the heart, without which knowledge is vain, and faith an empty name. It is to the heart that the eye of Him looketh who cannot be deceived by external things;—and it is when a man retires from all consideration of the opinions of his fellow-men, and looks seriously into those processes of his mind which are open to the divine inspection,—it is then that he may discover his own moral condition, and may learn, if he seriously wishes to know the solemn truth, what he really is in the eye of God. Let him inquire what is the habitual current of his thoughts,—what the prevailing object of his desires,—what the governing motives of his conduct,—what place among them have the things of time, and what the things of eternity,—what influence have the motives and principles of the world, and what the great principle of devotedness to God. It is thus that he may learn those "secrets of the heart," which at present are hidden from all human eyes, but will be fully revealed at the great

day of account, and rigidly tried by the pure and holy standard of the law of God. The important truth, therefore, cannot be too often or too seriously contemplated, by every one who feels the overwhelming interest of eternal things,—that, whatever be his faith, and whatever his knowledge,—whatever be his character in the eye of man, and whatever his real and active usefulness to others, there is a distinct and most serious object of attention which immediately concerns the safety of the soul,—and this is, that, while he cultivates faith, knowledge, and brotherly-kindness, he shall give all diligence to add temperance, patience, and godliness. Without these, while he greatly benefits others, he may inflict irreparable injury on himself;—amid many good works, he may neglect that discipline of the heart in which is involved his own safety as a moral being.

But, while this first and great concern receives the attention which it demands from every immortal being, let it never be forgotten,

that there is a fatal error in the mental economy, unless the fruits are manifest in every part of the conduct and character. In this respect, the high principle of Christian faith ought to maintain its superiority over all other motives and principles, however honourable these may be in themselves. The great question to those who profess to be under its power is,—"What do ye more than others?" Are there men, who, from kindness of natural feeling, or those principles of honour and integrity which prevail in the world, perform many deeds of exalted integrity, benevolence, or kindness:—the man of faith must do more. Are there those, who, on such principles, shew much mildness, forbearance, and forgiveness:—the man of faith must do more. It is vain to talk of faith and godliness, while an inconsistent conduct, a contracted selfishness, or an unsubdued temper, gives the empty profession the lie. When the great principle really exists within, it will be manifest by its fruits,—and, when it is thus exhibited, in all its consistency, and all its power,—it is then

that it challenges the conviction of those who oppose themselves, and compels them to acknowledge its reality and its truth, and to "glorify our Father who is in heaven."

THE

CULTURE AND DISCIPLINE

OF

THE MIND.

ADDRESSED TO THE YOUNG.

By JOHN ABERCROMBIE, M.D.
V.P.R.S.E.

NINETEENTH EDITION.

EDINBURGH:
WILLIAM WHYTE AND CO.
BOOKSELLERS TO THE QUEEN DOWAGER;
LONGMAN AND CO., LONDON; W. COLLINS, GLASGOW;
AND W. CURRY JUN. AND CO., DUBLIN.

MDCCCXLII.

EDINBURGH : BALFOUR AND JACK.

The substance of the following Essay was originally published as a Rectorial Address, delivered in Marischal College, Aberdeen, and it was printed by desire of the Senatus Academicus. It is now republished with considerable enlargement in the practical parts; and with the omission of those observations which had an immediate reference to the place and the circumstances in which it was delivered.

EDINBURGH, *December* 1836.

THE

CULTURE AND DISCIPLINE

OF

THE MIND.

If we are asked what constitutes the greatest difference between one man and another, considered either as intellectual or as moral beings, we cannot hesitate to answer,—the culture and the discipline of the mind. Under the influence of those external things, by which we are so habitually occupied, our consideration is too little directed to the wondrous essence of which we are conscious within. But when we turn our serious attention to the economy of the mind, we perceive that it is capable

of a variety of processes, of the most remarkable and most important nature. We find also, that we can exert a voluntary power over these processes, by which we control, direct, and regulate them at our will,—and that, when we do not exert this power, the mind is left to the influence of external impressions, or casual trains of association, often unprofitable, and often frivolous. We thus discover that the mind s the subject of culture and of discipline, which, when duly exercised, must produce the most important results on our condition as rational and moral beings; and that the exercise of them involves a responsibility of the most solemn kind, which no man can possibly put away from him.

Youth is the season peculiarly adapted for this great undertaking, while the attention is not yet engrossed by the distractions of active life, and while those injurious habits have not yet been formed, which are so often fatal to the health of the

mind. Allow me, then, to direct your earnest attention to this high concern,—the highest and the most important that can engage your anxious care. While life is opening before you, with all its fair prospects, and all its promises of happiness, learn to feel the supreme interest of the discipline of the mind;—study the remarkable power which you can exercise over its habits of attention and its trains of thought:—and cultivate a sense of the deep importance of exercising this power according to the principles of wisdom and of virtue.

You are at present eagerly engaged in prosecuting useful and important acquirements in various branches of knowledge,—but all that is furnished by early study gives only the elements for forming the mind, and for gradually training it to that intellectual vigour and moral discipline by which it may be prepared for farther and

greater pursuits. While, therefore, you prosecute with ardour the various departments of science, you will remember that a higher and more extended object is still before you. You will feel the necessity of rising above the details of individual sciences, to those results to which all science ought to combine in leading us,—the culture of the understanding itself,—and the practical application of those rules by which the mind may be directed towards the discovery of truth, and by which the truth so discovered may be applied to the actual duties and responsibilities of life. You will learn to estimate the value of that greatest of all acquirements, a well-regulated mind, and to study with anxious care what those qualities are which constitute such a mind, and what are the particular pursuits, and the mode of conducting them, which are best adapted for the high attainment. You will learn to estimate the benefits which arise from such a regulation

of the mind,—to see how, in every inquiry, it tends to conduct us to truth,—how it leads the mind to apply itself to various pursuits with a degree of attention adapted to their real value, and to follow out the inductions of each to its last and highest object,—the culture of the moral being.

Amid the most zealous prosecution of knowledge, learn to press forward to those great and ultimate truths, by which science ought to lead us to the Omnipotent and Eternal Cause. Philosophy fails of its noblest object, if it does not lead us to God; —and, whatever may be its pretensions, that is unworthy of the name of science, which professes to trace the sequences of nature, and yet fails to discover, as if marked by a sunbeam, the mighty hand which arranged them all; which fails to bow in humble adoration, before the power and wisdom, the harmony and beauty, which pervade all the works of Him who is Eternal.

Judging upon these principles, we are taught to feel that life has a value beyond the mere acquirement of knowledge, and the mere prosecution of our own happiness. This value is found in those nobler pursuits which qualify us for promoting the good of others, and in those acquirements by which we learn to become masters of ourselves. It is to cultivate the intellectual part for the attainment of truth,—and to train the moral being for the solemn purposes of life, when life is viewed in its relation to a life which is to come. These exalted pursuits are not more conducive to the great objects which are presented to us as moral and responsible beings, than they are calculated to promote our own happiness and peace. Constituted as we are, indeed, and placed in certain relations to objects of sense, and to other sentient beings, we are, in some degree, under the influence of external things. But the powers which wield the destiny of our happiness are chiefly within.

It is there that we trace the elements of those noble faculties, which, if duly cultivated, secure at once our usefulness and our happiness;—and it is there that we find the germs of those vulture passions, whose dominion is worse than eastern bondage, and under whose relentless tyranny, a man who is master of the world may be himself a slave. In the conquest of these consists the highest dignity of our nature, —and in the control and subjugation of them is our only solid peace.

Among the phenomena presented by human character, none will strike you as more remarkable than the various objects which men propose to themselves in life. In all, a certain vision of happiness seems to float over the scene;—but how various are the courses by which the phantom is pursued, —and how many enter upon the pursuit without proposing to themselves any definite course at all. They never seem dis-

tinctly to put to themselves the question, in what the imagined enjoyment consists, and what are the elements by which it is constituted. One expects to find it in wealth,—another in power,—a third in rank,—a fourth in fame,—while not a few are found to seek it in a mere round of excitement, perishing with the hour which gave it birth. Thus a large proportion of mankind pass through life, pursuing an imagined good which too often eludes their grasp,—or which, even after it has been attained, is found incapable of giving satisfaction. They live upon the opinions of other men, and are thus left at the mercy of a thousand external circumstances, by which the good they had so long pursued is blasted in the enjoyment. They enter upon life without forming any definite conception of what the great business of life ought to be;—and, when they perceive that it is drawing to a close, they look back with astonishment to find that it has pass-

ed over them like a dream,—that they cannot say for what purpose they have lived, —or perhaps are compelled to acknowledge that they have lived in vain.

But life presents another aspect, when we view it as a scene of moral discipline;—when we look not at its pains and its pleasures, but its high duties and its solemn responsibilities,—and at the discipline of the heart, from which springs a true and solid happiness which external circumstances cannot destroy. All, then, is defined and clear. The object is definite, and the way to it is marked as by a light from heaven. Each step that is gained is felt to be a real and solid acquirement; and each imparts a sense of moral health, which strengthens every principle within for farther progress. I know that I carry your best feelings along with me, when I thus call your attention to that course of life, which alone is adapted to its real and solemn importance,—which alone is worthy of those

powers of our intellectual and moral nature, with which we have been endowed by Him who formed us. In the culture of these is involved not only a duty and a responsibility, but a source of the purest and the most refined enjoyment. For there is a power which is calculated to carry a man through life, without being the sport and the victim of every change that flits across the scene;—this power resides in a sound moral discipline, and a well-regulated mind.

The foundation of all mental discipline, in the words of an eminent writer,* consists in the "power of mastering the mind." It is in having the intellectual processes under due regulation and control,—and being thus able to direct them, upon sound and steady principles, to the acquisition of useful knowledge, and the discovery of truth. Here we are, in the first place, reminded of that remarkable power which

* M. Degerando.

we possess over the succession of our thoughts. We can direct the thoughts to any subject we please, and can keep them directed to it with steady and continuous attention. In the due culture of this power consists a point in mental discipline, of primary and essential importance. By the neglect of such culture, the mind is allowed to run to waste amid the trifles of the passing hour, or is left the sport of waking dreams and vain delusions entirely unworthy of its high destiny. There is not a greater source of difference between one man and another, than in the manner in which they exercise this power over the succession of the thoughts, and in the subjects to which these are habitually directed. It is a mental exercise which lies at the foundation of the whole moral condition. He who, in early life, seriously enters upon it, under a sense of its supreme importance ;—who trains himself to habits of close and connected thinking,—

and exerts a strict control over the subjects to which his thoughts are habitually directed,—leading them to such as are really worthy of his regard, and banishing all such as are of a frivolous, impure, or degrading character,—this is he who is pursuing the highest of all earthly acquirements, the culture of the understanding, and the discipline of the heart. This due regulation, and stern control of the processes of the mind, is, indeed, the foundation of all that is high and excellent in the formation of character. He who does not earnestly exercise it,—but who allows his mind to wander, as it may be led by its own incidental images or casual associations, or by the influence of external things to which he is continually exposed, endangers his highest interests both as an intellectual and a moral being. "Keep thy heart with all diligence," says the sacred writer, "for out of it are the issues of life."

Now, it cannot be too anxiously borne in mind, that this great attainment is, in a remarkable degree, under the influence of habit. Each step that we take in the prosecution of it will facilitate our farther progress,—and, every day that passes over us, without making it the object of earnest attention, the acquirement becomes the more difficult and the more uncertain;—and a period at length arrives, when no power exists in the mind capable of correcting the disorder which habit has fixed in the mental economy. The frivolous mind may then continue frivolous to the last, amusing itself with trifles, or creating for itself fictions of the fancy, no better than dreams, and as unprofitable: The distorted mind may continue to the last eagerly pursuing some favourite dogma, while it is departing farther and farther from truth: And the vitiated and corrupted mind may continue to the last the slave of its impure and degrading passions.

Such is the power and such the result of mental habits;—and let us ever bear in mind how such habits are formed. They arise out of individual acts of the mind; and we have not the means of determining what number of such acts are necessary for forming the habits,—and at what period these may acquire a mastery which shall peril the highest interests of the mind. We cannot determine how many instances of frivolity may constitute the permanently frivolous mind;—how many trains of impurity may constitute the permanently corrupted mind; or what degree of inattention to the diligent culture of the powers within, may be fatal to the best interests of the man, both as an intellectual and a moral being. Hence the supreme importance of cultivating in early life the mastery of the mind,—and of watching with earnest attention the trains of thought which we encourage there, as we cannot determine at what period a habit may be formed, the

influence of which shall be permanent and irremediable.

When we take this extended view of that which constitutes sound intellectual culture, we perceive that it does not consist in the mere acquirement of knowledge, however extensive that knowledge may be; for this may be an exercise of memory alone. We feel that there is a culture of the higher powers of the mind, of greater difficulty, and greater importance far, without which knowledge is vain. This is a due regulation of the various mental faculties themselves, so that each may perform its proper office upon the knowledge we have acquired; that the various powers within may observe a healthy relation towards each other; and that from the whole may result a due influence upon our motives and principles of action, as moral and responsible beings. Without attention to these considerations, a man may accumulate a mass of knowledge which yields him

no real advantage;—he may have gone the round of the sciences, commonly so called, while he has made no progress in that higher department, the knowledge of himself.

The great principle of self-government, therefore, consists in calling ourselves to account, both for what we know, and for what we do, and for the discipline which we exercise over the processes of our minds. It consists in questioning ourselves rigidly, what progress we are making in important acquirements,—what are the subjects which chiefly occupy our attention,—whether these are such as are really of adequate value, or whether, amid undue devotedness to some favourite pursuit, others of higher importance are overlooked and forgotten; or whether, under a habit of listless vacuity, and inactivity of mind, we may be allowing the best of our days to creep on without eager attention to any solid acquirement at all. It

consists in questioning ourselves in the same manner, what opinions we have formed, and upon what grounds we have formed them; whether they have been received from others without examining for ourselves, or after a slight and partial examination, directed, it may be, by some previously formed prejudice,—or whether they have been deduced from a full and fair examination of all the facts which ought to be taken into the inquiry. It consists, finally, in scrutinizing our mental habits, our moral feelings, and our principles of action;—what are the subjects to which our thoughts are most habitually directed; what the motives which chiefly influence our conduct:—what the great objects which we propose to ourselves in life;—what place among these have the principles of selfish indulgence, personal distinction, or mere human applause;—and what place have those exalted principles which spring from a higher source,

and rise to that elevation from which they spring,—a spirit of devotedness to Him who made us,—and views and feelings which point to an existence beyond the grave.

In regard to the discipline of the mind, as well as the external conduct, the rule proposed by Bishop Butler is of high efficacy and universal application. It consists in simply asking ourselves, before proceeding to any act, or any course of action,—"is this I am going to do right, or is it wrong,—is it good, or is it evil." This rule is so simple, and so obvious, that most people, probably, think they act upon it;—but this they will find has been done in a very loose and inefficient manner, when they come, in every instance, distinctly to put the question and distinctly to answer it. The practice of doing so in every step of life will grow into a habit of mental discipline, of vital importance to the highest interest of the moral being. It ought to be exercised, not in regard to our

actions alone, but also in regard to the processes of the mind,—the direction of the attention, and the regulation of the thoughts. These will be found to be as much under the influence of a voluntary power, as are our external actions;—and the due and habitual exercise of this power, is, in both cases, of equal and indispensable importance to a sound moral condition.

A leading defect in many characters, and one which lies at the foundation of much and serious imperfection, both intellectual and moral, is the want of this habit of self-inspection and self-interrogation. This deficiency is not confined to the listless and vacant mind, which allows life to glide over it amid frivolities and waking dreams. It may be found in those who are intensely and actively occupied with external things. It may be found alike in the laborious student, who is eager in the pursuit of knowledge,—and in the active

man of the world, who, engrossed with the affairs of the living scene which is moving around him, has neglected the wondrous scene that is passing within,—has never cultivated the rigid scrutiny of his own intellectual and moral condition. The truth, indeed, seems to be, that, after a certain period of life, few have the hardihood thus sternly to look within. For a high degree of moral courage is required to face the disclosure which awaits the mind, when it is thus turned inwards upon itself;—a disclosure, it may be, of the result of years and years that have passed over it in listless inactivity, which yields nothing to reflection but an empty void; or in the eager pursuit of objects which are seen to be worthless; or in the acquirement of habits which are felt to be destructive of the health of the mind;—the disclosure, it may be, of important duties neglected, and important pursuits overlooked, and the conviction that life is drawing to a close

while its great business is yet to begin. Few have moral courage to meet this disclosure; and when it is met, with an attention in some degree adequate to its supreme interest, the impressions which it yields are encountered by the force of confirmed moral habits, which seem to claim every faculty and feeling of the mind as theirs by hopeless bondage. Hence the supreme importance of cultivating in early life the habit of looking within; the practice of rigidly questioning ourselves as to what we are, and what we are doing,—what are our leading pursuits, and what our mental habits; what are our plans and prospects for life, and what influence, over the whole of our moral discipline, have the solemn realities of a life which is to come. What I have called the power of mastering the mind, consists, if I may use a strong mode of expression, in compelling it to listen to such a course of interrogation as this, and compelling it to return distinct and de-

finite answers. Each hour that, in early life, is spent in such an exercise, is fraught with results of greater value than all that the world can give. The exercise is gradually confirmed into a mental habit; and, under the influences of a power from on high, the consequences are likely to be such as reach beyond the narrow limits of time, and extend into eternal existence.

The regulated condition of the mind, which has been the subject of these observations, is applicable to every situation in which a man can be placed in life, and leads him to feel his way through its various pursuits and responsibilities in a manner adapted to the requirements of each of them. But it more properly belongs to the aim of my present suggestions, to mark its influence upon the progress of the mind itself;—and in this respect I may allude, in a very few words, to its remarkable bearing upon three leading objects of men-

tal discipline,—the acquisition of knowledge,—the formation of opinions,—and the culture of those moral emotions of the heart, which are the last and highest object to every responsible being.

I. A regulated condition of the mind contributes, in a most material degree, to our progress in knowledge. In this respect, it is, in the first place, the source of a quality which ought to be carefully cultivated in early life, which I may call *mental activity*. This consists of an eager inquiring state of mind, ever on the watch for information from any source from which it can be drawn,—and ever anxious to make its information more correct and more extensive. It leads to a habit of observation, by which we learn to derive knowledge from all that is passing around us. It teaches us, farther, to direct this mental activity in a proper manner, by selecting such objects as are really deserving of our

regard, and by directing the mind to them with a steady and continuous attention, so that we may acquire a full and connected knowledge of all the facts and their relations to each other,—and thus prepare them for the conclusions or general principles, which they are calculated to yield. It thus tends to preserve us from frivolous pursuits, by leading us to a steady culture of those which are of real importance, and with an eager and persevering attention adapted to their true value. For, among many pursuits, no man can excel in all; and the foundation of eminence is a due selection, and a leading direction of the mind to those which are thus selected. You will be at no loss to discover around you, remarkable and instructive examples of the effects produced by the want of this sound discipline of the mind. One you will find dreaming through life, without directing himself with energy to any object,—a second wasting his powers, perhaps of a superior order

in a desultory application to a variety of studies, without excelling in one,—while a third devotes himself with eagerness and zeal to some favourite pursuit, neglecting others which really merit his chief regard.

Closely connected with the habit of mental activity is the habit of reflection on the relations of the facts which are acquired,—leading us to observe their connections, and the conclusions which they yield;—and the habit of association,—referring facts to others with which they bear an analogy, and to principles or opinions which they tend to confirm, modify, or overturn. It teaches us also to trace among facts the relation of cause and effect, and to deduce from them general conclusions or general principles, the last and main object of science. Now, the whole of this course of mental activity is productive not only of intellectual improvement, but of the highest mental enjoyment,—while the frivolous

or ill-regulated mind, is not only fatal to improvement, but is a burden to itself, and, as life advances, becomes its own tormentor. Let, then, the eager desire of knowledge carry you above those pursuits which waste the best years of so many around you, and leave them, even to the close of their days, the victims of frivolity still.

In regard to this important object, there are some suggestions, of a practical nature, which I may offer in a few words.

(1.) Carefully select the subjects to which your attention is to be more particularly directed;—and, having selected them, from a deliberate conviction of their importance, prosecute them steadily and perseveringly, upon a regular and connected plan. To a certain extent, the mind derives a feeling of relief from varying its occupations, but this requires to be done with caution. For a most essential mean of progress in intellectual pursuits, is to have one leading object to which the energies of the mind are

directed in a special manner. This ought not only to be cultivated by regular periods of study, but should be kept, as it were, habitually before the mind, so as to prove a ready subject of thought to which the attention may be directed during intervals of disengagement from any direct pursuit. The mind cannot be unoccupied, and to all there are many such periods of disengagement:—it is a most important part of mental discipline to cultivate the habit of having ready and accessible objects to which the mind may then be directed in a profitable manner. This is a practice of great value in the regulation of the mind itself, and calculated to prevent habits which are destructive of a sound mental condition; and it is also a source of much real intellectual progress. For a subject which is habitually contemplated in this manner, often expands itself before the mind, with comparatively little effort, developing views and principles which had

probably escaped us in periods of more regular study.

(2.) Cultivate the habit of intense attention to whatever subject is before you, whether in reading, observation, or in listening to the instruction of others; and check the first tendency either to a listless inactivity of mind, or to allowing it to be led astray by visions of the imagination, or by incidental trains of association foreign to the subject. Sound intellectual progress depends less upon protracted and laborious study, than on the habit of close, steady, and continued attention. It is from it that evidence derives its power to produce conviction;—it is by means of it that any subject of inquiry is brought before the mind in a manner calculated to yield sound views and accurate conclusions;—and the deficiency of it is the source of those partial and distorted impressions by which men, even of considerable endowments, often wander so widely

from truth. This habit, of what I may call active attention, will carry you through every pursuit in a manner calculated to ensure the utmost advantage from it. Does a subject occur to you, either in reading, conversation, or reflection, in which you feel that your knowledge is deficient, you will promptly go in search of the information that is wanting. In perusing a work, your attention will be acutely and distinctly directed to the information to be derived from it,—the train of investigation or of reasoning which the author pursues,—the authenticity of his facts,—the validity of his arguments,—the accuracy of his conclusions,—the purity of his style,—his character as an observer;—and all the circumstances which may enable you to decide whether you can trust to him as a guide in the branch of knowledge of which he treats. A discourse to which you have occasion to listen, may possibly be uninteresting, and may promise little improve-

ment, and you may feel the disposition to allow the mind to wander from it;—but in such circumstances there should never be forgotten the paramount importance of the discipline of the mind itself, and the danger of anything that might break in upon the habit of attention. In the pursuits of science, this habit of the mind leads to sound knowledge and correct conclusions: —in the affairs of ordinary life, it is the source of promptitude, united to discretion, and prudence;—in the highest concerns of man as a moral being, it brings him under the due influence of those important truths which are calculated to guide and regulate his moral emotions, and his whole character and conduct in life.—Such is the power of the habit of attention:—it is not saying too much of it to affirm, that it lies at the foundation of the whole character.

(3.) Cultivate the habit of correct observation, association, and reflection.—This

is nearly connected with the former.—It leads us to be acutely awake to all that is passing around us, and to be ever on the watch for information from every source from which we can draw it. It teaches us to treasure up such knowledge in an orderly and accessible form, by associating new facts or principles with others to which they bear a relation or analogy, and with principles or objects of inquiry which they tend to illustrate.—It leads us, farther, to trace among facts the relations which they bear to each other, and the new principles and conclusions to which they conduct us; and thus, by a process of the mind itself, to deduce new and important truths from a simple series of facts which are before us.—This condition of the mind is the source of what we call Observing and Inventive Genius, which lie at the foundation of all philosophical eminence. Observing Genius leads the philosopher not only to acquire facts; but to arrange, generalize,

and reflect upon them in such a manner as to deduce from them new truths which the mere collector of facts does not discover. It was by reflections produced by the fall of an apple from a tree, that Newton was led to those principles which regulate the movement of the great bodies of the universe. Inventive Genius, again, leads him not only to observe and arrange facts when they are presented to him, but to go in search of them. In doing so, he takes for his guides certain conjectures or assumptions which have arisen out of his own intense contemplation of the subject, and then commences a course of observations or experiments calculated to ascertain their truth. This habit of the mind, therefore, is peculiarly applicable to the experimental sciences, and in these has often been the source of the most important discoveries.

(4.) Study to acquire the habit of improving fragments of time. A very little experience will convince you of the great

importance of this rule, and will shew you how much may be done by the careful improvement of portions of time which are too often entirely lost.—They are lost, partly from the want of that habitual mental activity which has been so often referred to, and partly from not cultivating the habit of having some leading object always, as it were, in progress, and keeping it so before the mind, that the attention may, at any time, be directed to it in a profitable manner.

(5.) In the culture of the mental habits, which have been referred to, much benefit is derived from writing,—provided it be done in a distinct, methodical manner, and in your own words. In History, for example, it may consist of chronological tables, with the addition of your own reflections on the relations of the events, and the displays of character which they present to us;—in other subjects, of abstracts of important facts, statements, and arguments,

with your own observations. Such a practice tends to fix the attention, and to cultivate habits of correct thinking, and correct expression.

The points of mental discipline, which have been thus briefly referred to, you will find at first to require an exertion, and a steady effort to exercise that power which you possess over the processes of the mind. If left to itself, the mind is very apt to become listless, or to be led away into incidental trains of images which have arisen within itself, or have been suggested by some trivial source of association. But you find that you have the power to control its movements,—to direct it into trains of thought of a useful and important kind, and to check the first risings of such as are of an opposite character. The effort, made with steadiness and perseverance, will become easier the longer it is pursued, and will be gradually

formed into a habit,—the important habit of a well-regulated mind.

According to a common mode of expression, we attach great importance to that which we call *genius*, and which we consider as an original quality of particular minds. But what is of greater value, than that which often receives the name of genius, is not to be considered as an original quality, but a habit of the mind. It is nothing more than intense mental activity, steadily directed to some leading pursuit. This important principle was well illustrated by Sir Charles Bell, in his introductory address to his first course of lectures in Edinburgh, when he took occasion to allude to that distinguished physiologist and surgeon, Mr John Hunter. Mr Hunter, he said, had been called a man of genius, but he was disposed to take a different view of his character, from that which is com-

monly expressed by that term. The great and leading feature in Mr Hunter's character, he added, was,—that he was steadily and eagerly devoted to his object,—and that no change of external circumstances had the power, for one moment, of turning him aside from it. Was he in his study, or in his dissecting room, or mingling with men in the common occupations of life;—was he at sea, shut up in a crowded transport,—or was he in the field of battle with bullets flying and men dropping around him,—one great object was steadily and habitually before him, and he never lost an opportunity of seizing upon every thing that could, in any way, be made to bear upon it.—This, call it by what name you will, is the source of all distinction. It is greatly assisted by education, but what I am anxious to impress upon you is, that it is not an original quality, but an acquired habit of the mind,—and a habit

which may be cultivated by every one who determinedly devotes himself to the high attainment.

II. The second great mental operation, in which is felt the value of a regulated mind, is the formation of opinions. Here various errors are committed, but all of them are of serious moment. There is a listless vacuity of mind, which prevents it from being directed with attention or interest to the formation of defined opinions, even on subjects of supreme importance. There is a servility of mind which leaves it the slave of mere authority, without forming opinions for itself by personal inquiry. And there is a rude and reckless affectation of mental independence, or liberty of thinking, which leads a man to despise authority, to aim at striking out for himself a system distinguished from the received opinions of those around him,—led, it may be, by a love of singularity or

the vanity of appearing wiser than his neighbours;—or, perhaps, impelled by the condition of his moral feelings, to argue himself into the disbelief of what he wishes not to be true. From all such distortions of the understanding a regulated mental discipline tends to preserve us. It induces us to approach every subject with a sincere and humble desire for truth,—to give its due influence to authority without being blindly led by it,—to give its due weight to every kind of evidence, without partial views or imperfect examination,—and to direct the whole powers, not to favour, establish, or overturn particular opinions, but honestly and anxiously to discover what is truth.

This is a subject of intense and solemn interest. A slight attention to the philosophy of it will enable you to perceive its true bearings upon us as responsible beings,—and how, on the highest of all subjects, a man may incur moral guilt in

the formation of his opinions. Both as intellectual and moral beings, the great agent by which we are acted upon is *truth*. Truth derives its power from evidence; and there are laws of evidence, which, in their nature, are as absolute and immutable as the laws of physical relations. But for the operation of them, a state of the mind itself is required, and without this, even the best evidence may be deprived of its power to produce conviction. For the result of evidence upon the mind depends on close and continued attention; and this is a voluntary process which every one may be able to perform. It is on this ground, therefore, that we hold a man to be responsible for his belief,—and contend that he may incur deep moral guilt in his disbelief of truths which he has examined in a frivolous or prejudiced manner, or which, perhaps, he indulges in the miserable affectation of disbelieving without having examined them at all. The remarkable fact,

indeed, appears to be, that the chief source of unbelief, on the greatest of all subjects, is generally to be found in a previous moral corruption of the mind. It arises from no defect of evidence, but from a state of mind on which the highest falls without power. This striking moral process begins by a man renouncing the guidance of sound moral principle, and the restraints of religious truth both on his conduct and on the discipline of his heart. The great truths which he thus violates are then repelled as intruders, which disturb his mental tranquillity; and, from this stage in his downward progress, the career is short, and the mental process simple, by which he succeeds in driving the belief of them from his mind. Such is the wondrous economy of the human heart,—and such is the history of many a man, who, after a certain course of moral degradation, has sought refuge in infidelity.

On the great questions of religious be-

lief, therefore, allow me to suggest to you some considerations, respecting the manner in which a well-regulated mind ought to approach this highest of all inquiries.

(1.) Beware of indifference ;—that is, of treating the subject in a light and careless manner,—professing, it may be, a nominal acquiescence in certain truths, because you have been taught them in your infancy, or because they are the established creed of those with whom you are particularly connected. Study the subject for yourselves ; —study it in a regular and connected manner, and let every step be a matter of close and serious personal inquiry. Study it under a deep sense of its supreme importance, and with an anxious desire that the opinions you form shall be consistent with truth, and that they shall embrace the whole truth ;—and, finally, study it with a devout reliance on a light and an influence from above, which are promised

to the humble inquirer,—a light which will conduct to the truth,—and an influence which will fix that truth as a ruling principle in the whole economy of the heart. It is the part of a regulated mind, not only to know the truths, but to know the grounds on which they are believed to be true,—"to be able to give a reason for the hope that is in you." When the great elements of the Christian faith are thus studied in a manner adapted to their supreme importance, they are found to rest upon a chain of evidence which falls upon the mind with irresistible power. This evidence is addressed to us as rational and responsible beings,—but its influence depends upon the attention which is directed to it,—and this is a voluntary process of the mind which it is the solemn duty of every man to perform. That the truths may exert their due influence upon the moral condition, they ought thus to be fixed in the understanding;—for it is at once

the source of true faith, and the best antidote to enthusiasm, that faith be founded in knowledge. But that this great purpose may be answered, the attention must be devoted not to the evidence alone;—it must be extended, with the same anxious care, to the doctrines themselves. These are presented to the candid inquirer with a wondrous force of internal evidence, when he perceives their harmony with each other, and their adaptation to the actual condition of man; and to a mind thus prepared, they soon vindicate their claim to subjugate every emotion of the heart to their power,—the power of immutable and eternal truth.

(2.) Acting upon these principles, you will learn to estimate, according to its real value, a display of character which, I fear, you may meet with in the intercourse of life. This is what I would call the cant of infidelity,—the affectation of scoffing at sacred things, by men who have never ex-

amined the subject, or never with a degree of attention at all adapted to its deep importance. The conduct of such persons is not more melancholy in itself, than it is at variance with every principle of a regulated mind. The following account of the mental condition, in a noted class of French infidels, is given by one who knew them well, and whose authority is entitled to the utmost confidence. "Vanity hath a greater share in their disputes than conscience; they imagine that the singularity and boldness of the opinions which they maintain will give them the reputation of men of parts; by degrees they get into a habit of holding impious discourse, and, if their vanity be accompanied by a voluptuous life, their progress in that road is the swifter. . . . . They have made no deep examination; they have learnt some few objections which they are perpetually making a noise with; they speak from a principle of ostentation, and give themselves the

lie in the time of danger."*—Such is infidelity as described by one who had ample opportunity of knowing it; and such will it in general be found to be. I will not venture to maintain, that it is impossible to find a man who has arrived at this conclusion, after an extent of examination adapted to the supreme importance of the subject, but I hesitate not to assert that it will be exceedingly difficult;—and I believe it may be confidently stated as a fact, that calm and serious inquiry has almost invariably ended in conviction.

III. But I must leave this deeply important subject, and hasten to offer a very few remarks on the third of the topics to which I have alluded,—the influence of a regulated mind on the moral emotions of the heart. In these consists the highest state of man,—his soundness as a moral being; and there flow from them by direct and natural

* Bayle's Dictionary.

sequence, all those affections and motives of action which guide his conduct to his fellow-men,—and those nobler emotions still which raise the feeble and finite being to Him the infinite and eternal. In the culture of these are involved not only the chief dignity of our nature, and our prospects as moral and responsible beings,—but also, in an equal degree, our present sound and solid happiness. They constitute that true wisdom, of which we are entitled to say, on the best of all authority, "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

Here we are reminded of that remarkable principle which pervades the whole economy of the mind,—the intimate relation which exists between the moral emotions, and intellectual processes over which we have a direct and absolute control. As moral and responsible beings, the power by which we are acted upon is truth. But all truth must first be presented to the un-

derstanding,—and being, by an appropriate process of examination, received into the mind, it is then, by a voluntary exercise of attention and reflection, to be applied in in such a manner as to produce its proper influence on the moral emotions of the heart. It is thus that a beautiful harmony and consistency pervade the whole economy of the mind, eminently worthy of Him who made it;—and it is thus that a solemn responsibility attaches to ourselves, in regard to those emotions of the heart over which we have not a direct control. It is precisely the same principle to which I have already referred, respecting the responsibility of man for his belief. He cannot believe as he wills, by any direct effort of his mind;—yet a deep responsibility attaches to him in the formation of his opinions: And he cannot call forth at his bidding the moral emotions of the heart; but the deepest guilt may be involved in the absence of them; because, by

an established economy of his mind, they arise out of processes of the understanding, over which he has an absolute power, applied to truths which, under a higher influence, are calculated to exert a direct control over the moral emotions of the heart. This part of the mental constitution is worthy of the deepest attention of every one, who appreciates that most essential of all pursuits, the culture of the moral feelings. It is by means of it that truth, which is received by a process of the understanding, is made to exert its power in controlling the tempests of the heart. It is by means of it that we can invite and cherish mental images and trains of thought, which tend directly to the highest purposes of our moral culture;—and can banish those which have an opposite tendency, as enemies which would poison the springs of moral health, and peril the safety of the moral being.

And what are the truths which, under a

supreme influence, our intellectual nature is thus to use as the engines of a power to control and regulate the emotions of the heart. They are those which refer to the attributes of God,—and our relation to him as the creatures of his hand, moral, responsible, and immortal. They rest upon evidence so extensive and so varied, that its authority will be best appreciated by those who have made the greatest attainments in the laws of rigid inquiry. This evidence is above us, and within us, and around us. Every step that we take, amid the wonders of creation without, leads us to new discoveries of the power, and wisdom, and goodness of Him who called them into being by his word, and maintains them all in undeviating harmony. When we turn our attention within, we read in the moral impressions of our own minds, or, in other words, in the light of conscience, his attributes of holiness, and justice, and truth. And, meeting with difficulties in the book

of natural religion, we have only to turn to the page of revelation, where all these difficulties are removed, and the divine character is displayed with a harmony and consistency which carry conviction to every candid mind. We find there disclosed the wondrous provision which has been made by infinite wisdom, and infinite mercy, for the restoration of man from his state of moral ruin,—and a power adapted to his moral weakness,—and a light to shine upon his moral darkness,—and a code of ethics more high, more pure, and more extensive far, than ever was contemplated by the wisest of men. The whole is supported by a weight of evidence which fixes itself upon the mind with irresistible power,—and, with a tone of authority, it calls our attention to all the responsibilities of life, and all the realities of a life which is to come.

Such are the truths, which, as moral causes, are calculated to act upon the

mind, and thus to control and regulate our emotions, and our whole character, as moral and responsible beings;—and it is of the utmost consequence that we attend to the philosophy of that process by which they may be made to answer this great purpose, and without which it may be entirely lost to us, with all its important results. This is an exercise of attention and reflection, over which every man feels that he has a voluntary control. The truths are endowed with certain tendencies which are as uniform as the operation of physical causes; but their actual efficiency is closely connected with this exercise of the mind itself; and it is thus, that, by ignorance, or inattention, a man may incur the deepest guilt, in the want of that moral culture, the great agents of which are thus presented to him, and pressed upon his attention as a rational being. Now, the truths to which I have thus referred are usually called objects of faith,—and you will often

find a distinction made between objects of reason and objects of faith,—as if the latter were, in some respect, inferior to the former in their evidence and stability. But this is entirely without foundation. The truths which are the objects of faith are properly so called, because they do not come under the cognizance of any of our senses; but they are as directly addressed to the understanding as the most obvious inductions of physical science; and they carry a weight of evidence, as direct and incontrovertible, to every mind which is open to its power. This evidence, indeed, is of a different character, but its strength and its authority are the same. The truths themselves are calculated to engage the highest powers of the mind; and the most exalted understanding, that ever dwelt in human form, will derive from them a new feeling of intellectual vigour and moral health, by which it shall wing its way to those regions where shine forth in a pecu-

liar manner the divine perfections; and shall there prostrate these highest powers in devout and humble adoration of him, "who was, and who is, and who is to come." This, and nothing less than this, is true philosophy; for it is this alone that traces the phenomena of nature to their cause; it is this alone that takes within its grasp the whole range of truth, and places fairly and deliberately against the mere objects of sense, those great realities which are the objects of faith.

Our highest concern as moral beings, therefore, being not with objects of sense, but with things future and objects unseen, to live, in a certain degree, under the influence of these is essential to a sound moral condition. But this requires an effort of the mind of a very peculiar nature. It requires that we cherish the habit of banishing for a time the power of sensible objects, and of raising the faculty of conception to an immediate contemplation, and

realizing impression, of things and events which are the objects of faith. It requires that we cultivate the habit of referring every act of our life and every element of our character to the will of God,—of treasuring up in the mind the principles and maxims of his word,—and of making them the subject of contemplation in such a manner, that they may at all times promptly exert their power, both in the regulation of the conduct, and the discipline of the heart. We have formerly alluded to the numerous intervals of disengagement of mind which are left to us even in the busiest life, and the great importance of having accessible subjects of thought to which the mind can then be directed in a profitable manner. It is in reference to such intervals, that the sacred writer describes so beautifully the effect produced upon him, when he sought refuge in the contemplation of the Divine character,—and the impression which immediately followed, of a sense of the divine

protection: "When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches,—in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." The most exalted aspirations of the poet can ascend to nothing more sublime than this, at once pointing to the highest elevation to which the finite being can aspire to rise,—and leading to some of the most important principles both in intellectual and moral science.

Let it then be your study in early life, to cultivate that sound condition of the mind, by which its powers are not kept in bondage to the mere objects of sense, but are trained to the habit of bringing down upon it the habitual influence of the truths which are the objects of faith. Amid the collisions of active life on which you are about to enter, you will soon find yourselves in want of a safer guide than can be furnished by human wisdom;—"You will require a higher incentive than human praise,—a more exalted object than human ambition,

—a principle more fixed than human honour."* This object and this principle are to be found only in a devout and habitual sense of the homage which we owe to Him who made us, and in the habitual desire to make his word at once the rule of our conduct, and the regulating principle of every emotion of the heart. Devote yourselves with eager enthusiasm to the high acquirements of science; but cultivate also that habit of the mind by which science shall continually lead you to the eternal cause. And, while you are taught to follow the planet through the wondrous regularities of its movements, —when you find the comet, after being lost for a century, returning at the appointed period from the solitudes of its eccentric orbit,—when you extend your view beyond the system in which we move, and penetrate into that field in which ten thousand other systems revolve around ten thousand other

* Lord Stanley's Rectorial Address at Glasgow,—newspaper report.

suns in ceaseless harmony,—Oh rest not in a cold recognition of the facts, but take one step, and say,—"These are thy wondrous works,—thyself how wondrous:"—And rest not here, but take yet another step, and recognise this Being as the witness of all your conduct,—as the witness even of the moral condition of the heart:—Seek after purity of character, for you cannot go where you are not followed by that eye; aspire after purity of heart, for that eye extendeth even there.—And, feeling your inability for this mighty undertaking, seek continually a power from God,—a power which he alone can give, a power adapted to your utmost want, and which is promised to every one that asks it. In your progress through life, indeed, you will not fail to meet with those by whom this momentous truth is treated with derision, as the vision of fanaticism, unworthy of a philosophical mind. But never allow yourselves to be imposed upon by names; and never

suppose there can be anything unphilosophical in the belief, that an influence should be exerted on the mind by Him who framed the wondrous fabric :—And be assured you follow the dictates of the most exalted philosophy, when you commit yourselves to him as the guide of your youth ; when you resign yourselves to that guidance, and ask that powerful aid, both for your conduct through this life, and your preparation for the life which is to come.

BALFOUR AND JACK, PRINTERS.

THINK ON THESE THINGS.

FIFTEENTH THOUSAND.

EDINBURGH:

WILLIAM WHYTE AND COMPANY,

BOOKSELLERS TO THE QUEEN DOWAGER.

LONGMAN AND CO. LONDON; W. COLLINS, GLASGOW;

AND W. CURRY, JUN. AND CO. DUBLIN.

1842.

EDINBURGH: BALFOUR AND JACK.

THINK ON THESE THINGS.

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."—PHILIPPIANS iv. 8.

WHEN a man's attention is directed to the solemn inquiry, what is his moral condition in the sight of God, he cannot fail to perceive that the answer is chiefly to be sought for in the discipline of the mind. His external conduct is the only test by which his character can be estimated by his fellow-men; but this, it is obvious, may be guided by motives and principles of a very inferior or even selfish description, principles which would not bear the inspection of man, far less the scrutiny of Him who cannot be deceived by external appearance, but whose eye looketh directly into the heart. This import-

ant consideration is brought before us in the most forcible manner in various parts of Scripture; and the solemn truth is impressed upon our serious attention, that a man may hold a fair and respectable character in the estimation of men, while he is in a state of moral degradation in the eye of God.

Whenever this subject is referred to in Scripture, accordingly, we find the condition of the heart viewed as of equal importance with a man's conduct and character in life, or even brought forward as holding a more essential place in determining his condition as a moral being. "Keep thy heart with all diligence," says one of the inspired writers, "for out of it are the issues of life." "Let the wicked forsake his way," says another, "and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord." When the Psalmist, again, prays the Eternal One to scrutinise most rigidly his moral condition, it is by saying, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." And in another passage by the same writer, the discipline of the heart is placed upon a level with those great principles of veracity and justice, the least infringement of which exposes a man to the unanimous condemnation of his fellow-men. "Who shall as-

cend into the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in his holy place; he that hath clean hands and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully." Blessed," says our Lord himself, "are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

In all these passages of Scripture, and many others of similar import, there is distinctly and fully recognised the important principle, that we have a power over the succession of our thoughts, and the subjects to which they are directed. A deep and solemn responsibility thus arises, respecting the government of the mind; and to every one who feels, as he ought, this responsibility, it is of the greatest consequence to keep in view in what the voluntary power over the mind consists, and what are the principles on which it ought to be exercised by every rational being. Without this, a man may be lamenting defects in his mental condition, which refer to emotions over which he has no direct control, and may thus waste himself in useless regrets, instead of directing his earnest efforts to those mental processes, and those points of mental discipline, over which he can really exert a power. He may be lamenting his want of faith and confidence in God, of love to him, of submission to his will, and delight in his service, while he is neglecting that diligent and habitual

direction of the thoughts to the character, the works, and the will of God, from which, under the power of the Holy Spirit, these emotions naturally spring.

On this important subject, a beautiful harmony pervades the economy of the mind. The emotions of the heart, properly so called, are mental conditions over which we have not a direct power; we cannot call them forth at our will, however much we may desire to experience them, and however much we may feel, that in them really consists the healthy condition of the soul. But these emotions are called into action by certain truths, when these truths have acquired that established place, which their nature demands, in the economy of the mind; that is, when they have been the subjects of steady attention and serious reflection, adapted to their supreme importance. Now, this is a process of the understanding over which every man feels that he has a power. He can direct his thoughts to any subject he wills,—can keep them directed to it for such a period as he pleases, and withdraw them at his will. He has within his reach the means of acquiring the knowledge of those truths, which, as a moral and responsible being, most of all concern him; and he has the power to make these truths the subject of that calm attention and serious reflection, which may

lead to their natural and legitimate influence over the economy of the heart. In these great concerns, also, he is encouraged to look for the mighty Spirit of all truth,—who alone has power to purify the heart, and to produce a condition of the moral system, which diffuses itself, by inseparable consequence, over the whole character and conduct. It is thus that, according to the statement of Scripture, "out of the heart are the issues of life;" and it is thus alone that the character can be framed and regulated in a manner worthy of a moral being. When a man's attention is directed only to his conduct in life, he probably looks in a great measure to the approbation of men; that culture of the character, which has respect to the approbation of God, must have its origin in the heart.

Such, in a striking manner, was the experience of the Psalmist, whose mind had thus been disciplined to an habitual contemplation of the character and the will of God. "O how I love thy law, it is my meditation all the day." "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." "When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches,—in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." And it was by such a process of the understanding, directing his thoughts to this highest of all subjects, that he

experienced those wondrous effects of the truth on the whole economy both of his understanding and his heart, which he has described in a manner so striking and so comprehensive; "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple: the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes."

From this view of the subject, we must perceive the deep and important influence which is exercised over our condition by the government of the thoughts. It, in fact, lies at the foundation of the whole character, both intellectual and moral; and the man who would apply himself to this high pursuit with an attention adequate to its supreme importance, must begin by a diligent exercise of the power which he feels that he possesses over the current of his thoughts, and a careful selection of the subjects to which they are habitually directed. The leading defects which attach to individuals on this great subject, are probably referable to three heads.

I. An absolute engrossment of the mind with things in themselves valuable and important, but of a temporal or external character,—whether the details of business, or the pursuits of science; while no leisure is left, and no inclination cherished, for

those great inquiries which relate to a man's own moral condition, or to the supreme importance of future and eternal things.

II. A habit of listless vacuity or inactivity of mind, which leads it to be engrossed by absolute trifles, and prevents it from applying itself to any subject with energy or interest.

III. A habit of dwelling in a world of imagination, amid visions of fancy and waking dreams, which occupy the mind in all those intervals in which it can escape from the necessary engagements of life, to the exclusion of those various objects of high importance to which such intervals ought to be devoted.

For the correction of such mental habits as these, there are two leading objects to which the attention ought to be carefully and steadily directed. The *first* is, to control and regulate the current of the thoughts, so as to cultivate the habit of having them steadily and continuously directed to subjects of adequate importance. We thus contend equally against the two great evils of listless frivolity and vacuity of mind on the one hand,—and on the other, of having the mind occupied with visions of the fancy entirely unworthy of its high destiny. This control of the thoughts, indeed, requires an effort, and to those who have long neglected it, the effort at first is great. But

it becomes easier the longer it is pursued, until it is gradually fixed into a habit,—the invaluable habit of a disciplined mind. For promoting the cultivation of this habit, the *second* great object to which I have referred is, to have always in view, or, if I may use such an expression, within reach, subjects of thought of adequate importance, to which the mind may readily and easily betake itself in all intervals of disengagement from the necessary avocations of life. To one who feels the deep importance of the subject, and is anxious to pursue this course of mental discipline, the great difficulty that presents itself is, to fix upon a plan for doing so, with a proper choice of subjects of reflection, and a proper distribution of them, so that the mind may be duly occupied, and yet not engrossed with any one subject to the exclusion of others that may be of equal value. Now, in the sacred Scriptures, along with numerous exhortations to this regulation of the thoughts, we have various and most important instructions in regard to the manner of conducting it, and the subjects of high importance to which the thoughts ought to be directed as their chief and highest object of serious attention. The passage before us contains a beautiful code of rules for this purpose; opening up a wide and comprehensive field for mental exercise of the highest and noblest kind, while at the same

time, the various subjects are so placed before us, as to point out their relation to each other, and the degree and order in which the mind ought to be directed to each of them.

I. The first of these objects to which we are exhorted to direct the serious attention of the mind, is Truth:—"Think on whatsoever things are *true*." The operation of the mind in regard to truth is twofold. The first is to acquire a knowledge of the truths, and to examine the evidence on which we are to receive them. In respect to those great truths which concern our relation to God, this leads us to a diligent study of the word of God, as well as of his works,—and a care and diligence to examine what opinions we have formed on this supreme inquiry, and on what grounds we have formed them; what are the objects of belief which we have received as true, and why we have done so. Having, by such a careful exercise of the powers of attention and judgment, acquired a knowledge and a conviction of the truths, the next exercise of the mind is, to make them subjects of thought in such a manner, that they may produce their proper influence on the moral condition. Now, there may be much knowledge of truth, and much careful study of evidence, while this great mental exercise is neglected; and the most important truths may thus be received as matters of

cold and barren speculation, yielding no results, and exerting no influence over the character. It is against this mental condition that the exhortation of the apostle seems to be directed, calling upon us not only to know the truths,—but to make them subjects of thought and reflection, so that they may fix their influence on the moral economy of the mind. Do we believe it to be a truth, that we are every moment exposed to the inspection of a being of infinite perfection, and infinite purity, from whose all-seeing eye nothing can cover us, and to whom even the thoughts of the heart and the whole moral condition within are constantly open; if we make this solemn truth the subject of frequent and serious thought, what influence must it not produce upon the discipline of the heart, and the whole of our conduct in every relation of life. No man can put away from him the truth, that a day is fast approaching when he must lie down in the grave; but it is also a truth, that another day will come with equal certainty, when, at the voice of the Eternal One, the graves shall yield up their dead, and those who have slept in death shall arise to judgment. Did we think of this truth with a seriousness in any degree adapted to its solemn interest, and make the reflection a frequent and habitual exercise of the mind, it could not fail to act upon every rational man with a power which

would be irresistible. It could not fail to make him feel the value of the soul which is to live for ever; and to force upon him the habitual conviction, how trivial in importance are the highest concerns of time, and how big with momentous interest are the concerns of eternity.

The exercise of a regulated mind in thinking on such truths as these, is something widely different from a simple acknowledgment of them as a part of our belief, with whatever sincerity this may be made. It is to place them before us by that realizing act of the mind, by which things future and things unseen are invested with the power of actual and present existence. It is by an act of imagination or conception to represent to ourselves the actual and dread solemnities of the day, when the last trumpet shall sound, and those who have so long slept in death shall come forth together as living men, and stand before God. It is to realize the appearance of the great white throne, and him who shall sit upon it, from whose face the earth and the heavens shall flee away. It is to place ourselves before him in the attitude of those who are to render their account,—to suppose the question put to us,—and to ask ourselves seriously what we shall answer. It is to represent our whole moral history,—and all the secrets of our hearts, then disclosed, and conscience awaking, with all its

power to condemn, independently of the sentence of the Omniscient Judge. Such is the exercise of a disciplined mind in reference to momentous truths like these; and such is the mental process which is really suited to our condition as moral beings. When we thus place the great realities of things future and unseen, against the lying vanities of life, and against the empty visions of a frivolous mind,—this is to meet the spirit of the apostle's exhortation, "to think on whatsoever things are true."

To a mind which has been disciplined to this sound and healthy exercise of its power, wide is the field of truth in which it may have occupation, at once the most instructive and the most interesting. From the planet revolving in its appointed orbit, to the economy of the insect that flutters in the sunbeam, it will find matter for studying with renewed adoration and wonder, the perfections of Him of whom they witness. In the course of Providence it will trace the workings of the same Almighty wisdom and power; and the moral attributes of his character will be contemplated with still higher feelings of adoration, as they are displayed in the economy of redemption through "God manifest in the flesh." But the exercise of such a mind in regard to the eternal incomprehensible One, has effects of a more personal

kind, and bearing directly upon its own moral condition. It leads a man to place himself as in the constant and immediate presence of God, and to feel that his whole conduct in life, and the most secret desires, motives, and imaginations of the heart, are at all times open to Divine inspection. It thus impresses upon him the important inquiry, whether his condition within will bear the scrutiny of that eye. In every decision of life, it leads him to inquire what will be pleasing to God; and feeling continually his own weakness and his liability to err, it leads him to look habitually for Divine direction, and Divine strength, to carry him through all the dangers and difficulties of life, and to prepare and purify him for the life which is to come.

There are still other mental exercises by which we may be profitably occupied in thinking on things that are true. There is a restless, active faculty of the mind, which is ever on the wing, ranging from scene to scene, often with little restraint from reason or truth. To what important purposes might this faculty be applied, were it sternly trained to confine its excursions to "things which are true." By means of it we might convey ourselves back to the ancient kingdom of Judea, and place ourselves in actual companionship with the meek and lowly Jesus. We might listen to his instructions, and hear him talk

by the way, till our hearts burned within us. We might accompany him through his unwearied course of devoted benevolence and kindness, till we felt ourselves constrained to follow his steps. We might attend him to Calvary, and witness the accomplishment of that triumph by which he abolished death, and brought in everlasting righteousness. We might be early at the sepulchre, and hear the angel proclaim the wondrous tidings, "he is not here; he is risen, as he said; come, see the place where the Lord lay." We might follow him farther still. We might enter, in exalted conception, even into the upper sanctuary, and present ourselves among the ten thousand times ten thousand of the redeemed who are around the throne; and join in their triumphant song, "worthy is the Lamb that was slain," till earth and all its concerns vanished from our view. Oh! what a power might be produced upon all our steps on earth by such exercises as these:—what an influence might the mind bring down upon itself, were it thus disciplined to the habit of "thinking on whatsoever things are true."

Such is a slight and imperfect outline of the nature of those subjects of thought to which the apostle exhorts us to direct the mind. The exhortation is of a most comprehensive character. It is calculated to occupy the mind with high and im-

portant truths, to the exclusion of those frivolous follies and vain imaginations which are so ready to fill that dark chamber of imagery of which every one is conscious who looks within. It is calculated to rouse to active and serious thought the dead and dormant feelings of those whose minds have never been disciplined to the habit of thinking on any subject with intense attention; and, farther, there is a peculiar and comprehensive power in the term, "whatsoever things." This reminds us not only to be careful to have the mind occupied with truth, but to have it directed with suitable care to all the truths which demand our attention as immortal beings. There is also a peculiar force in the expression "think on these things;"—for the word which is translated *think*, has in the original a most comprehensive import. It means, not simply to think, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, on the matters which are the subjects of thought; but to consider them,—to judge of them,—to reason upon them,—and draw conclusions from them. The expression thus implies a continued and intense application of the mind to the truths, so that we may deduce from them all the conclusions and principles which they are calculated to yield as matters of faith, and all that influence which they are fitted to produce upon the emotions of the heart, and the whole conduct

of life. Such and so extensive appears to be the mental process which the apostle enjoins, and the field of mental exercise which he presents to us, when he calls upon us to "think on whatsoever things are true."

II. The exercise of the mind, as applied to such varied and momentous truths, must not be confined to a mere speculative acknowledgment of them as matters of belief. It must be carefully extended to that mental condition by which the truths so received shall be habitually used as great moral causes, calculated to exert a directing and controlling power over the whole economy of the heart and the character. This view of the subject has been already referred to. It seems to be more particularly intended by the second part of the system of mental discipline laid down by the apostle, "think on whatsoever things are *honest*."

As the part of the apostle's exhortation immediately succeeding this, calls us to think on whatsoever things are *just*,—referring clearly to our conduct towards our fellow-men, I am disposed to regard the term *honest*, as expressing what may be called honesty, integrity, or consistency of mind. Taken in connection with the former exhortation, to think on whatsoever things are *true*, it seems to imply an honest and sincere desire to carry out the truths, so contemplated, to all their

consequences and tendencies to ourselves as moral beings. Thus, in our Lord's parable of the sower, the seed which fell into good ground and brought forth abundant fruit, is said to represent a man who receives the truth into an honest and good heart; that is, a mind disposed carefully to meditate on the truths so received, and sincerely desirous of carrying them into all the effects which they ought to produce upon the character and conduct. Such is the discipline of a mind, which "brings forth fruit with patience." Whoever looks seriously into the processes of his own mind, will be compelled to acknowledge how prone we are to neglect this most important part of mental discipline. We turn our attention to truths;—we study their evidence, and take them as a part of our creed;—we learn to argue in their defence, and to detect with critical precision sophistries which are opposed to them;—but how much and how often do we fail in the more important exercise of pressing home the truths in all their bearings upon ourselves. How do we fail in pressing the solemn inquiry,—if these things are indeed true, what manner of persons ought we to be,—and are we, in the condition of our hearts and the whole of our conduct in life, such as becometh those who really believe them. Do I think of the solemn truths which relate to the character of God,—and his all-seeing

eye being ever upon me;—then what influence hath this consideration upon my moral feelings. Do I think of a coming judgment, and that, stripped of all disguise, I must bear my part in the dread solemnities of that day, how seriously and how frequently do I ask myself,—how shall I appear. A devout and habitual inquiry of this description seems to constitute that honesty of mind which the apostle here enjoins;—and he then goes on in a very striking manner to impress the consideration of those leading points of character, which ought to be the habitual aim of every one whose mind has been thus disciplined. These are referred to four heads,—justice, purity, benevolence, and a kind consideration for the feelings of other men,—"whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, think on these things."

III. The exhortation to think on whatsoever things are *just*, leads a man to an anxious consideration of the various duties which he owes to other men in every relation of life. It directs him, in the first place, to the obligations of justice and integrity, in every kind of transaction in which the interests of others are concerned; and it goes much farther than this, extending to a variety of circumstances, which may affect other men in their cha-

racter, their feelings, or the estimation in which they are held by those around them. But the exhortation goes farther still, and leads a man not only to attend to the strict requirements of justice, when particular cases are strongly brought before him; but he is to "think on these things;"—he is anxiously to inquire what are the duties which he owes to the various individuals with whom his situation brings him into relation,—and whether he is discharging them in a manner which will bear the dread scrutiny of a Judge of unerring purity and justice. He who carefully and seriously thinks on whatsoever things are just, will thus rigidly question himself what are the duties which pertain to his particular situation, and how he is discharging them;—what are his duties as a parent,—as a child,—as a master,—as a servant,—as a snbject,—as a neighbour,—as a friend,—as a person holding some situation of public responsibility,—or as possessed of wealth, acquirements, talents, or influence, which give him the means of usefulness. In all such relations, what degree of serious attention is he directing to the sacred trust which is reposed in him. Is he carefully employing his wealth, his talents, his influence, for the glory of God and the good of men. Or without any imputation on his character for actual integrity and justice, is he wasting his days in a course

of listless indolence, selfish indulgence, or frivolous occupation, far beneath his high destiny as a moral being. It is easy for a man thus to sit down in a kind of respectable indifference and self-indulgence, without any such breach of his duty to others as may challenge the notice of his fellow-men. But a new field is opened to his view, when, placing himself in the immediate presence of God, and in the light of an eternal day, he views his various duties, responsibilities, and means of usefulness, and with a deep sense of the account he has to render to Him who searches the heart, devotes himself to the high requirement of thinking "on whatsoever things are just."

IV. Apart entirely from the duties which belong to every man in the various relations of life, there is a class of responsibilities of the most solemn kind, which pertain more immediately to himself. These relate to his own moral condition in the sight of Him who is not deceived by external appearance, but who rigidly tries the motives and principles within, and rigidly scrutinizes the condition of the heart. The apostle gives its full weight to this important consideration, when he calls upon us to "think on whatsoever things are pure." While the former part of his exhortation [illegible]s to the duties which we owe to our fellow-[illegible]s directs us in a more especial manner to

the relation in which we stand to God. It includes a wide and extensive class of the moral responsibilities of the inner man. It embraces many qualities of character of which human judgment takes no cognizance, but which are open to the inspection of Him who seeth in secret. It extends to the condition of the heart,—to the motives of the conduct,—the direction of the desires and affections of the mind,—and to the trains which chiefly occupy the thoughts, when intervals of leisure set them free from the necessary engagements of life. Are these such as will bear the inspection of a being of infinite purity: Or is there not in that chamber of imagery, much, very much, which no man would like to be exposed to the view of his fellow-men. If so, does not the impression transfix him with awe, when he remembers that it is all exposed to the eye of God. Whatever may be the position which he holds in the estimation of men, how can a man live on in calm indifference, when he feels that the discipline of his mind is far from God;—and how can he fail to perceive, that, if he wishes to know his real moral aspect in the sight of the Eternal One, he has only to look calmly and seriously within. And how can he fail to estimate the weight and the importance of the apostle's exhortation, and to feel the extent of the truth which it conveys,—that there can

be no purity in the sight of God, unless the habitual aim and desire of the heart be, to "think on whatsoever things are pure."

Now, it is always to be born in mind, that the whole of the important exhortation we have been considering, recognises the great principle of our mental constitution, by which we can exert a direct control over the thoughts. Every one feels that he has this power, however much he may neglect its exercise. In various parts of Scripture there is impressed upon us in the strongest manner, the deep responsibility which attaches to the due culture of this voluntary power, and how much it lies at the foundation of a sound moral condition. We are taught to keep the heart with all diligence, because out of it are the issues of life. While the wicked is called upon to forsake his way, the unrighteous man is with equal authority required to forsake his thoughts,—implying that the one of these moral processes is under our control as well as the other. And we feel that it is so. However much the mind may be disposed to fly off into trains of vanity, from neglect of a sound mental culture, we feel that we can curb it in its career of folly, and bind it down to objects and trains of thought more worthy of its high destiny. We know, indeed, that this requires an effort, and that when the effort is withdrawn, the mind again either sinks

into listlessness, or wanders off into some train of thought which former habits have rendered more congenial. But such habits have arisen from a neglect of the due culture of this important power which we possess over the mind; and the same principle leads us to the process by which the habits are to be corrected,—habits which are so destructive of the health of the mind. This consists in having at all times ready to be brought before it objects of thought which are really deserving of its powers;—and of cultivating the habit of having the thoughts directed to them with a steady and continued attention. Such objects are to be found with little difficulty in the works, the word, and the perfections of God; and a special power from Heaven is promised to every one who feels the supreme importance of this great undertaking, and who seeks this power to conduct him to its accomplishment. But while we habitually look for this power as essential to our success in this high design, let us beware of imagining that we may sit still in indolence and await its coming. Let us study diligently the direct control which we have over the processes of the mind; let us observe how we can banish all images and trains of thought which are unworthy of a sound mental condition, and invite and cherish such as are of an opposite

tendency; and the conviction will be forced upon every rational man, that his solemn responsibility is fully in accordance with the actual power which he possesses over the processes of the mind, when as the great test of his moral condition within, he is called upon to "think on whatsoever things are pure."

V. The last part of the exhortation leads us to think on whatsoever things are *lovely*, and whatsoever things are of *good report*. Without entering upon any minute analysis of the different qualities expressed by these two terms, it is evident that they are meant to direct us to all those attributes of Christian character and conduct, by which a devoted servant of Christ may make his light shine before men, and compel them to glorify his Father who is in heaven. They lead us to all those gentle and amiable qualities which become the disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus;—to that spirit which delights in doing good, even to the evil and unthankful, and anxiously seeks out for itself opportunities in which this disposition may be gratified. They include all those qualities of the temper, character, and conduct, which recommend themselves to men of every class and of every name,—all that is meek and lowly,—gentle and easy to be entreated,—full of mercy and of good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. They include the fruits of the Spirit, which are love, joy,

peace, long-suffering, meekness, gentleness, patience. They extend to the forgiveness of injuries, and to all the exercises of that charity which suffereth long and is kind. Such qualities are of *good report* among men; there is no despising or perverting them; and they force upon all, the conviction of what a different scene the world would present, were the conduct of the mass of mankind regulated by the high principle of Christian kindness.

Now, in regard to all these attributes of character and conduct, the exhortation does not merely require us to practise them when we are placed in circumstances which directly call upon us to do so; but we are to go in search of the circumstances; we are to "think on these things." We are diligently to enquire where there is any virtue, where there is any praise; who within our reach are in want of our kindness, and in what manner we can best consult their comfort, and relieve their distresses. Are there, within the sphere of our influence, those over whom we might exercise a power in rescuing them from ignorance, frivolity, or vice, —those whom we might be instrumental in leading to serious thought on the subjects which concern their eternal peace. Are there those to whom we ought to exercise forbearance or forgiveness; or those among whom we might act the part of

peace-makers. Have we heard of the fatherless or the widows in their affliction; has the slightest notice reached us of the bereaved, the helpless, or the destitute. Let us think on these things; let us think of their wants, their sufferings, and their feelings, till we make these feelings in some measure our own. Let us not wait for the call of importunity, but under the influence of these feelings hasten to their aid, coveting earnestly the high design of entering the abodes of sorrow and suffering as messengers of mercy. Such was he who humbled himself, and became a man of sorrows,—and such it becomes his disciples to be. He has left us an example that we should follow his steps, and he watches with a jealous eye how we follow him. Splendid deeds of public usefulness are noth required for meeting his notice,—but acts of kindness, done in a spirit of devotedness towards himself, to the weakest, the meanest, the humblest of his people; "for verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done unto me."

The whole of this important subject particularly deserves the serious attention of the young. That regulation of the thoughts which is so essential to a sound moral condition, is in a remarkable degree under the influence of habit; and the manner in

which this habit is cultivated in early life exerts a deep and vital influence over the whole character. Study, then, with anxious care, those processes of thought of which you are conscious when you look within. Observe how you can, by a steady effort, direct the thoughts to any subject you please, and observe how, when this effort is withdrawn, they wander off into frivolities and follies. Remark how much time is often allowed to go to waste, while the mind is either sunk in listless apathy, or engrossed by trifles no better than dreams; and how it is thus incapacitated or indisposed for those inquiries of infinite and eternal moment which claim its first and highest regard. Submit not thus to be the sport and the victim of every wild delusion that fancy frames; but devote yourselves determinedly to the high design of having the processes of thought under stern and rigid control. Select with care the subjects to which they ought to be directed; and cultivate the habit of directing them to these with steady and continued attention. The practice will become easier the longer it is pursued; until it becomes the confirmed habit of the mind; and it is a habit which will diffuse an influence of the most important kind, both on the tranquillity of the mind itself, and the culture of its highest and noblest faculties. This influence will be felt in reference to every pursuit to which

you can direct your attention; but our present object is its bearing upon the highest of all concerns,—that which relates to the culture of the soul for the life which is to come. In this view of the subject, there are two points of mental discipline to which I would more particularly direct your attention.

I. Cultivate the habit of having the mind under the influence of the things which are not seen. Amid the daily engagements of life, whether occupied by its business, or distracted by its frivolities and follies, how remarkably is the mind bound down to the power of objects of sense. But know ye not that there are objects of another class, —solemn realities, certain though unseen, which claim your first and highest regard. Know ye not there is an eye that never sleeps, which follows you through every step of your journey of life,— that there is a world unseen, which is peopled by myriads who have finished their earthly pilgrimage. Know ye not that a day is approaching with fearful rapidity when all who move in the busy scene around you shall be silent in death,—and that another day will come with equal certainty, when at the voice of the Eternal One the dead shall arise incorruptible, and small and great shall stand before God. And there is a heavenly state where nought that is unclean can enter, which is

gladdened by the immediate presence of God, and where the glorified spirits around the throne find their chief enjoyment in rendering homage to him who redeemed them to God by his blood. Are there not some whom you loved when on earth, who have joined that blessed assembly; and do your thoughts never follow them into the state of purity and peace on which they have entered; do you not seek to join them in their new and refined enjoyments; and do you not spurn from you the earth and all its offered pleasures, while you thus, by the wondrous power of faith, reunite yourselves to those whom you love. Alas, that the mind should be bound down to the slavery of objects of sense, when it is endowed with powers to make these great realities its own. Alas, that it should grovel amid the dust of earth, when it can thus ascend into the upper sanctuary and into the immediate presence of God,—and bring down from thence an influence adapted alike to the duties, the difficulties, and the troubles of life,—and a light that shall shine upon every step of the path which leads to this everlasting inheritance.

Seek then earnestly the high attainment of having the mind thus habitually under the influence of unseen and eternal things. Seek to feel all the actual realizing impression of the presence of God

—the holiness of his character,—the purity of his law,—and his all-seeing eye following you in every step of life. Retire oft from the tumult of the world, and think how rapidly life is passing on, and how soon it will be over ;—think on the feelings of the bed of death ;—think on the dread solemnity of the moment when the immortal spirit shall return to him who gave it ; follow it, by intense conception, beyond the boundary which divides time from eternity ;—think on the scene which will then burst upon its view,—the wondrous disclosures of that fearful moment,—and the eternity that lies beyond it. Well might the apostle confine himself to the short and simple exhortation, "think on these things ;"—for if they were thought on in a manner in any degree adequate to their overwhelming interest, their effect upon the whole conduct and character could not fail,—the serious inquiry could not but promptly follow,—" What manner of persons ought we to be."

II. Cultivate the habit of rigidly inquiring into your own moral condition. This must be considered as one of the most essential acquirements of a disciplined mind,—as of the most vital importance to the health of the soul. But it is an exercise for which the mind feels little inclination,—which it is not disposed to press with the closeness which it requires,—and from which, in fact, it would gladly

escape. It can therefore be accomplished only by determined resolution, under a due sense of its eternal moment; by firmly and distinctly putting certain questions to ourselves, and by firmly and distinctly framing to ourselves the answers. What are my leading objects in this life which is hastening to a close, and what influence over them have the dread realities of a life which is to come. What are the leading motives of my actions. How far are they guided by a desire to promote my own enjoyment or advantage, or to procure the approbation of men; and what instances can I trace in which they are guided by a simple impression of duty to God, or the power of devotedness and love to the Redeemer. How am I discharging the various duties which belong to the particular situation in which I am placed; and how am I improving the means and opportunities of usefulness which that situation affords me; when called to account specially and individually for each and all of these, what shall I answer. What is the moral condition of the heart,—what impression do I perceive there of the presence of God, and a sense of the Saviour's love;—what feeling of the value of the soul, and the realities of an eternal world.—What are the chains of images and currents of thought which chiefly occupy the mind, and which seem to rise most spontaneously there whenever the attention

is set free from the necessary engagements of life; are they such as will bear the inspection of that Being of unspotted purity whose eye traces them all;—are they inclined to rise to things above, or to be engrossed with the trifles of earth;—are they disposed to grasp at things which are true—or to luxuriate in listless indolence amid visions and fancies as wild and as empty as dreams.—What evidence do I perceive of a progress in character, —of an advancement in holiness of heart and of life,—of an increasing preparation for the solemn hour when my state of moral discipline shall close for ever. What reason have I to believe that I am at peace with God, and what are my hopes for a life which is to come. What fruit am I bringing forth to the glory of God,—what conformity am I acquiring to the example of Jesus. Am I living to myself, or am I living to God; am I living for time, or am I living for eternity.

Let such questions as these be firmly and distinctly proposed, and let them be firmly and distinctly answered. From the moment that such an exercise becomes the calm and established habit of the mind, a new train of views and feelings will arise, to which it was formerly a stranger, and with a sense of astonishment that they were so little felt before. The disclosure, indeed,

will be fraught with matter for deep humility and self-condemnation; but this is the healthy attitude of a soul as it seeks to return to God. A new existence now opens before its reviving powers, as it learns to rise above the influence of objects of sense,—as it learns habitually to feel the presence and the perfections of God,—and to value the rich provisions of his word, and the mighty power of prayer. At each step which it takes in this new life, indeed, it feels more deeply its want of a righteousness which is not in itself, and its need of a power which is not in man, to carry forward the great work of preparing the immortal being for a life that is to come. But the mind thus aroused to a sense of its moral necessities is met by the wondrous adaptations of the gospel of peace, and a voice from heaven hails the awakening spirit with the tidings of redemption.

THE

CONTEST AND THE ARMOUR.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THINK ON THESE THINGS," &c.

SIXTH THOUSAND.

EDINBURGH:

WILLIAM WHYTE AND COMPANY,

BOOKSELLERS TO THE QUEEN DOWAGER;

LONGMAN AND CO. LONDON; W. COLLINS, GLASGOW;

AND W. CURRY JUN. AND CO. DUBLIN.

1841.

EDINBURGH: BALFOUR AND JACK.

THE

CONTEST AND THE ARMOUR.

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood: but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world,—against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness:—And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace:—Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked:—And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:—Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance."—EPHESIANS vi. 10—18.

THE striking and comprehensive exhortation, contained in this passage, stands in a connection which gives it intense and peculiar interest. In

the early part of the epistle, the inspired writer had laid before his Ephesian converts, a brief but luminous view of the great provisions of the gospel of Christ, and he had impressed the value of the blessings which had been conferred upon them, as Gentiles, in being admitted to a participation in this message of mercy. He then goes on to deduce from this the solemn obligation which was laid upon them, of cultivating a character and conduct becoming the gospel,—a conduct which should mark a decided distinction between them and the heathen from whom they had been separated. With this view he especially impresses upon them qualities of character which had no place in the code of heathen morality, but which hold a prominent rank in the high morality of the gospel,—lowliness, meekness, and long-suffering, purity, veracity, kindness, forgiveness, and peace. He warns them against anger, wrath, clamour, evil-speaking, and all malice;—and entreats them to walk in love,—to be kind and tender-hearted towards each other,—forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, had forgiven them. He urges upon them the cultivation of sobriety, purity, and chastity, not in conduct only, but also in speech;—and he farther exhorts them to christian circumspection and watchfulness, redeeming the time,—and to the culture of an

habitual spirit of devotion, and of thankfulness towards God,—"giving thanks always, and for all things, unto God the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

These general exhortations he follows up by others of a more personal or relative kind;—the duties of husbands and wives,—of parents and children,—of masters and servants,—impressing upon all, who call themselves the disciples of Jesus, the obligation of being distinguished, in every relation of life, by a conduct becoming that profession,—and to be remarked by all as widely different from the conduct and character of those who know not God, and obey not the gospel of Christ.

Having laid before them this high and extensive code of christian morals, he concludes his instructions, by calling their attention to that discipline of the heart, by which alone this consistency of character can be produced and maintained,—and without which all culture of the external conduct is a baseless fabric, fair, it may be, in the eyes of men, but defective in that which can give it any real value as respects the sound condition of a moral being.—"Finally, my brethren," he adds, as if this were the crowning part of his whole exhortation, "be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might;—for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against

powers,—against the rulers of the darkness of this world,—against spiritual wickedness in high places: wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

Whoever feels, as he ought, the supreme importance of the subject, must perceive, that the foundation of all true regulation of the character must be in the discipline of the heart. This is laid down in the clearest manner in various parts of Scripture; and it is a principle which carries its own evidence to every reflecting mind. The points of supreme importance in the inquiry, therefore, are,—what are the causes to which we are exposed, that have a tendency to impede this internal culture;—and what are the means provided, by which the operation of these causes may be counteracted in such a manner, as may prevent their deadly influence upon the most solemn of all concerns, the culture of the soul for the life which is to come. In the passage before us these causes are referred to several heads, which, when translated, as it were, from the figurative language in which they are expressed, appear to be referable to three leading classes, without doing violence to the spirit of the apostle's meaning.

I. The influence of malignant spirits, here de-

signated "principalities and powers." On this solemn and mysterious subject the knowledge imparted to us is very limited; but, from what is distinctly stated in various parts of Scripture, we have every reason to believe, that we are exposed to such an agency;—that there are powers of darkness, which, in the mighty purposes of the eternal One, are permitted to exert a certain influence over the human mind, but an influence of a limited nature, the actual power of which depends very much upon ourselves. It depends upon the solemn consideration, whether we steadily resist this agency, when we feel its first approaches to the mind,—or whether we calmly resign ourselves to its influence. There is thus presented to us a subject of the most solemn interest, and one which demands our most earnest and serious attention as moral and responsible beings. A consideration of the most solemn nature it undoubtedly is,—that there is a certain state of mind,—a certain rising of desire,—a certain evolvement of imagination, which marks the hour and the power of darkness,—a malignant effort to destroy the moral health, and place in jeopardy the safety of the soul. Let each arouse himself to all the danger, and all the solemnity of the moment. Let him recognise a power which others cannot see, that is seeking his destruction.

Let him see a hand which others cannot see, that points to the armour by which the attack may be repelled. The mighty conflict may be, as it were, the work of a moment. In that dread moment, the assault may be made upon the feeble and helpless being;—in that same moment, by the feeble and helpless being having recourse to the whole armour of God, the battle is won.

II. The blinding or darkening influence of worldly pursuits, and objects of sense;—"the rulers of the darkness of this world." Various are the forms in which the things of this world occupy, engross, or distract the mind, so as to draw it astray from the due impression of the great realities which are the objects of faith. One devotes his whole regards to the amusements and pleasures of life, —a second to wealth,—a third to fame,—a fourth to power. More worthy in themselves, though often not less engrossing, the high pursuits of literature and science may be cultivated in a manner which makes them referable to the same class,—the class of pursuits which look not beyond the things of time. And then there are the cares and the anxieties of life, which are apt to occupy and distract the mind,—bowing it down, it may be, in such a manner, that even while the world presents nothing that yields satisfaction,

the soul yet cleaves to it with the eager aspiration, "who will shew us any good." In whatever way the things of earth may thus affect us, they are apt to exert a blinding or darkening influence upon the mind, or to act as a veil interposed between it and the solemn realities of things which are not seen. Who is there, that has not, in one degree or another, experienced this power. In the moments of calm and serious thought,—it may be on the bed of sickness,—in the time of affliction, or under some other circumstances which led a man to retreat from the world for a time, and forced him to retire upon himself,—who has not heard the voice of conscience pleading for God,—who has not felt the dread realities of eternal things,—who has not had forced upon him the conviction that he was living in vain. And, when the peculiar circumstances had passed by,—when the mind was again engrossed with the active pursuits of life, who has not experienced, that the impression, which for the time seemed so vivid, vanished as if it had never been. Such is the power of the darkness of this world. Thus, in the striking language of Scripture, does the god of this world blind the minds of them that believe not;—and thus, according to the representation of our Lord himself, do the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of

other things, choke the good seed of the word, and render it unfruitful.

III. "Spiritual wickedness in high places." The literal translation of the paragraph appears to be, "Spiritual things of corruption in heavenlies." The word "heavenlies" may mean either heavenly places, or heavenly things: if we take the latter interpretation, the passage will be, "spiritual things of corruption in heavenly things;" which, without any violence, may be considered as implying, "the corrupt aversion of the heart to heavenly things." Of the enemies of the soul, which are pointed at by the apostle, this is perhaps the most uniform in its agency. A man may retreat from the world, its tumults, and its cares; and he is often placed in circumstances in which he is compelled to say, that it presents nothing worthy of his regard. Even the agency of the powers of darkness we do not know to be constant and unrelenting. But the enmity of the heart of man, in its natural state, to God, is unchanging and unceasing. God is not in all his thoughts, and he cannot regard the divine character with any degree of satisfaction. He has no inclination to look within, and to inquire what is his own relation to a being of unspotted holiness. Heavenly things he cannot contemplate

with any kind of interest, for the essence of heaven is holiness; and holiness has in it no beauty that can lead the natural heart to desire it. And even with regard to those who have been led to form some just conceptions of the character of God, and the value of the gospel of peace, and to feel in some degree the powers of a world to come,—what daily cause have they to mourn over a soul that cleaves to the dust, a mind that tends continually to start aside, and throw off the impressions of things the most sacred and solemn, to be occupied with anything rather than God. How much do they feel a law in their members warring against the law of their minds; and how often, amid their daily conflict, and the daily wanderings of their heart from God, are they constrained to exclaim with the apostle, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me."

Having such enemies to contend with, both from without and from within, and exposed to their combined influence in every step through this solemn scene of moral discipline, how shall the feeble, unstable, and helpless being, hope to make any progress in the mighty work that is before him.—"I thank God," adds the apostle, "through Jesus Christ my Lord."—It is only when we come as helpless sinners to the cross of the Redeemer,

that we can make the first step in this momentous undertaking ;—and we cannot hope to make any progress in it, except by looking to him continually, both as our righteousness and our strength. "Abide in me," says our Lord, "and I in you ; as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me,"—"without me ye can do nothing." The man who has learnt to feel his own weakness, will learn also to know, that he must not only look to the Redeemer for the pardon of sin, but must wait upon him continually for progressive sanctification,—for every step of advancement in the divine life,—and for every victory over those enemies of the soul, which are so apt to retard its progress toward heaven.

But while we steadily keep in view this great foundation, this mighty refuge of the soul in its utmost need, we must also remember that means are provided which it is our part to employ with all diligence,—that a daily warfare is before us, in which we are ourselves called upon to fight the good fight of faith. To this contest, indeed, we are not sent in our own strength ;—but still the warfare is real ; and we are required to engage in it with the same firmness and perseverance as if the conflict were entirely our own. So it was, in various instances, in the experience of God's

ancient people, whose history is, in many respects a figure of the christian life, and christian warfare. When Amalek came down to oppose the passage of Israel in their progress towards the promised land, Joshua was commanded to take chosen men and go and fight with Amalek. Easy would it have been for him who had divided the sea before them, and supplied them with water out of the rock,—now to have dispersed Amalek with a word, while they should only have been required, as on another memorable occasion, to stand still and see the salvation of God. But such was not his pleasure. A battle was to be fought with this warlike people; and like any other battle, the conflict raged, with various and fluctuating success, in the valley of Rephidim. While the contest was going on, they had still before them the signal of the divine presence in the remarkable circumstance, that, when Moses lifted up his hands, Israel prevailed, aud when he let them down, Amalek prevailed. The means are added by which the hands of Moses were supported when they became heavy; and in the end Amalek was dispersed before the host of Joshua; —but with the undoubted symbol of the divine presence constantly in their view, this result did not take place till the battle had raged to the going down of the sun.

And so it must be in the experience of every individual christian. When he looks to the cross of the Redeemer, he beholds at once the source and the symbol of a power which is able to make him more than conqueror over all his spiritual enemies. But it is when he goes out to the battle, arrayed in all the armour of God, and puts forth his utmost strength to use the armour thus provided,—it is then that he is entitled to look for a communication of this power, and a supply for every want, and a strength amid all his weakness, to carry him on through every danger, till having been thus enabled to be faithful unto death, he shall receive the crown of life.

In the warfare, thus figuratively represented to us, "we wrestle not," says the apostle, "against flesh and blood:"—that is,—it is not a bodily contest,—it is a warfare within. Accordingly he adds, in another place,—"the weapons of our warfare are not carnal,—but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds,—casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

In this warfare, therefore, the enemies with whom we have to contend, are such as exert their influence upon the mind;—the acts of warfare by

which the contest with them is to be conducted, consist of acts of the mind;—and the armour which we are exhorted to take, to enable us to engage in this warfare with success, consists of truths, motives, moral causes, and spiritual influences, which are calculated to act upon the mind, and to produce in it a certain state of moral feeling which constitutes the healthy condition of the soul. That these truths and motives may produce their proper influence upon the mind, a power from on high is indeed required, without which we can do nothing. But this in no degree diminishes the obligation upon us to perform the part, and to perform it with diligence, which really belongs to us as moral and responsible beings. This brings us to processes of the mind itself, which every man is conscious that he has the power to perform. However much the actual performance of them may have become distasteful from a depraved condition of the heart, or impaired by long habits of neglect of that important discipline of the mind on which they depend, they are not less the absolute duty of every rational man, and not less essential to a sound condition of the moral being. Of the nature of the armour to be thus employed we have a striking exposition in the passage before us; when, after enumerating the spiritual enemies, to whose attacks we are

exposed, the apostle goes on to exhort every man who feels the danger of his position, and estimates aright the solemn importance of the warfare to which he is called,—"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, having on the breast-plate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;—praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance."

In attempting an illustration of this important subject, it does not appear to be necessary, that we should pursue the metaphor minutely through the various points which are here referred to under it. That is to say, it is not necessary to inquire, why truth is given as the peculiar armour of the loins, righteousness as the breast-plate, or for the defence of the feet the preparation of the gospel of peace. Nothing, it appears, would be gained by tracing in this manner, the figurative language of the apostle. Every useful purpose will probably be answered by viewing the passage in a more general way,—as simply an exposition of the various parts of that armour which

we are exhorted to put on, that we may stand in the evil day; or, in other words, that we may resist the influence of the various spiritual enemies to whom we are exposed in our passage through this short and solemn scene of moral discipline.

I. The first part of this armour is TRUTH: "having your loins girt about with truth." At the very first step of the inquiry, we are here directed to a process of the mind, of which every man has the conviction that he has the power to perform it. In the bodily warfare, from which the figure is taken, the man has the armour provided, but his part is to put it on in the manner in which it is meant to be worn;—and without this, the possession of it will be of no avail whatever for his defence in the battle. So in the spiritual warfare, an important part of the armour which is presented to him is truth;—but his duty, as a being endowed with powers of attention, memory, and reflection, is to receive the truth so provided into his mind, and to make it the subject of earnest and habitual attention and reflection,—so that it may be placed in circumstances for producing its proper influence upon the moral emotions of his heart, and his whole character and conduct in life. True indeed it is, that for

this great purpose a power is required which is not in man. But we do violence to this high principle, when we state it to the exclusion of that part which is really our own, and in regard to which the solemn responsibility is thrown upon ourselves. A man who goes to battle incased in all his armour, may still receive injury; but he who enters the conflict entirely unarmed, has no cause to be astonished if it is so with him, and must feel that the blame of his foolhardiness is entirely his own. Now the man who goes to battle without his armour, is a figurative representation of the vacant, listless, and frivolous mind. It is exposed to the power of every wild delusion that flutters by. The malignant spirits that seek it for a prey, find nothing to oppose them; for the entrance is open to every intruder, and all, it may be, is empty within. The deadening and darkening influence of earthly things take their turn of the occupancy, one succeeding another as accidental circumstances may determine, but each, in its turn, maintaining that possession of the soul which shuts out from its view the overwhelming interest of the things which are eternal. And in the absence of these, the corrupt affections and vain imaginations of the carnal heart itself, are ever ready to spring up at a call, deadening more and more the moral perceptions of

the mind, and fixing it more and more deeply as the willing slave of sin.

The great principle in the science of mind, which is brought before us in connection with this subject is, that the mind must be occupied; and, that if it is not occupied by that which is worthy of its high destiny, and tends to its moral culture, it will be speedily taken possession of by that which tends to its moral degradation and ruin. The first of the antidotes provided, or, in the figurative language of the apostle, the first part of the armour presented to us for this great purpose, is Truth; and to have the loins girt about with truth, seems to imply, cultivating the habit of having the mind so habitually occupied with the great truths which most concern its highest interest, that these may prevent the inroads of intruders which tend to its moral injury. For as the armour, in the figure before us, is of no use if it be merely in possession, without being girt about the loins in the manner in which it is intended to be worn,—so the knowledge of those great truths, and even the absolute belief of them, are of no value as means of moral defence to the soul, unless they are made the subject of habitual and earnest attention, and habitual and serious reflection, in some degree adequate to their supreme and eternal impor-

tance. This is to "have the loins girt about with Truth."

What then, are the truths which are thus to be used as armour of the soul against the enemies of its safety and its peace. They consist of all those great and solemn truths, which concern man as a rational and immortal being, and his relation to that incomprehensible One who is now his witness and will soon be his judge. In the present short and transitory state of being he is placed for a period of moral discipline. He has various duties which he is called upon to perform, and many responsibilities and means of usefulness which he is required to improve to the glory of God, and the good of man: and he has committed to his care an immortal spirit, to be disciplined for the solemn realities of a life that it is to come. Through every step of this mortal pilgrimage, he is exposed to an eye that never sleeps,—the eye of Him who is not only the witness of his conduct in every relation of life, but before whom even his most secret desires and imaginations are open, and are weighed in the balance of the sanctuary. Each day as it hurries unheeded over him, is leading him with fearful rapidity to the grave; and, after the short night of the grave, is that dread morning when the voice of the Eternal shall wake the dead;—and then there is the aw-

ful solemnity of the judgment of Him who cannot err;—and then there is Eternity. Were the solemn truth habitually present to the mind, that each day, as it passes over us, affects our preparation for these dread realities;—that each day,—each hour,—each act of life,—each train of thought that is encouraged in the mind, has its part in advancing or retarding us in this mighty work, and has thus a bearing on our prospects for eternity,—Oh! how could the impression fail to act as armour of the soul,—and, under an influence from on high, tend to guard it against principalities,—against powers,—against the rulers of the darkness of this world,—and spiritual wickedness in high places:—such is the mighty import of having the loins girt about with Truth.

II. When, under the influence of a deep and serious contemplation of such truths as these, a man's attention has been awakened to the solemn import of the eternity which is before him,—the next and most natural step in the processes of his mind is, to enquire into his own moral condition in the sight of Him who looketh into his heart. Is he prepared to meet that almighty One, who is soon to be disclosed in all the dread attributes of his character as a Judge of unerring purity and justice. Is he conscious of a moral condition which

affords him evidence of preparation for rendering to this incomprehensible One a strict account; or has he the conviction, that a future life in the presence of God, would really be a source of enjoyment to him.—Of that life we can form no other conception, than that its great peculiarity consists of perfection in holiness;—has he, then, the consciousness that progress in holiness is a leading object with him here;—if not, how can the perfection of it be a source of blessedness. What is the prevailing character of his thoughts, desires, and pursuits;—are they such as class him with those "who mind earthly things,"—who are carnally minded, which is said to be "death"—or with those who are seeking as their chief good, a portion which the world has not to give,—who are "spiritually minded," which is "life and peace."

When a man has put to himself such questions as these, with a seriousness adapted to their solemn import, he cannot fail to perceive his absolute need of a righteousness which is not in himself, before he can be considered as taking one step in the divine life,—before he can be prepared to make one effort in the Christian warfare. All his knowledge of truth, and all the attention he can direct to it, he feels to be totally inefficient in themselves for this mighty work. In the

sight of a God of unspotted holiness and boundless perfections, he feels a burden of sin upon his conscience, for which he can offer no satisfaction. Years and years that have passed over while he lived in a state of forgetfulness of God, seem now to rise up in judgment against him; and he feels also that he carries about with him a corrupt nature, which tends ever to lead him astray from God, and baffles all his feeble and inefficient efforts towards returning to him as the portion of his soul. To take a single step in the christian life, or to engage at all in the christian warfare, he perceives to be totally in vain, while such a load of actual guilt is unremoved, and while so much inherent corruption is unsubdued; —and for removing the one, and subduing the other, he feels that he has in himself no power. Yet the more he fixes his serious attention on the great inquiry, he feels more and more that without this he is lost;—that he cannot draw near to God except in trembling,—that he cannot encounter his spiritual enemies except to be destroyed,—that he cannot take one step in the path which leads to heaven, without righteousness,—without the blotting out of those sins which threaten to overwhelm his soul, and without the implanting in his heart of a principle of holiness. He perceives that both these are alike

indispensible for his safety;—but how is he to provide them. He is not called upon to provide them, but to put them on. He perceives them already provided in that marvellous dispensation of grace and of peace, which now beams upon him in all its wondrous adaptation to the wants of his soul,—thus bringing with it its own evidence that it comes from God;—and he feels that he is urged to no vain or unattainable act, but to one for which all is offered "without money and without price," when, as a first great step in the christian warfare, the apostle calls upon him to "put on the breastplate of righteousness."

When, under the teaching of the Spirit of all truth, a man has thus learned to see his moral necessities, and to estimate aright the provision that has been made for them;—when he has come as a helpless and burdened sinner to seek an interest in this provision, he has achieved that mighty step in his moral history, which is implied in putting on the breast-plate of righteousness. It consists, as we have seen, of two parts, in one respect distinct from each other, but inseparably connected in the great scheme of the gospel of peace. It consists of the righteousness of another laid hold of and embraced as the ground of his acceptance,—and a principle of

righteousness implanted in his heart, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and by daily communications from that Spirit, cherished and growing up in his progressive sanctification. Thus provided, he is ready to begin the spiritual life;—thus armed, he is ready to enter upon the spiritual contest. He feels that he is strong, but his strength is not in himself; and he looks forward to the course and the warfare that is before him, in the humble confidence, that in this strength he "shall be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand."

III. And whence is this confidence derived, and how is it maintained in the mind in such a manner as to prove a part of the armour of the soul. It is derived from the view which a man is now enabled to take of the stability of the gospel. "Having your feet shod with the preparation," or rather with the *firm foundation* "of the gospel of peace." In the whole history of redemption he sees the character of God displayed in a manner which is calculated to put to silence every unbelieving doubt. He sees the wondrous plan originating entirely in the free love and compassion of God,—devised by him from no motive but this compassion,—executed in a manner more marvellous than it ever could

have entered into the mind of man to conceive, —and all the benefits, thus provided, offered, without money and without price, to every one who will come. He arrives at the undoubted conclusion, that he who devised and executed such a scheme of mercy cannot possibly be unwilling to bestow it,—that the faithfulness of his character is pledged for the fulfilment of all that he has promised in his Son,—that his positive engagement to the Redeemer is pledged to bestow upon him of the travail of his soul until he is satisfied,—and that he who spared not his own Son, but gave him up to the death for us, will with him also freely give us all things, This is to have, as an important part of the armour of his soul, "the firm foundation of the gospel of peace."

IV. When, under the impression of such truths, and such views of the Divine character and procedure as have thus been briefly referred to, a man has been led to seek his safety and his strength in the great provisions of the gospel, he enters upon a course of life, in which he feels continually his own helplessness, and his constant need of cultivating intercourse with God, and of living under the power of things not seen. This intercourse and these impressions are main-

tained by Faith; hence adds the apostle, "above all, taking the shield of Faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

"Faith," says the apostle, in another place, "is the substance," or actual existence "of things hoped for,—and the evidence," or bringing into light "of things not seen." He thus briefly but strikingly directs our attention to that two-fold operation of faith, of which each exerts its proper and most important influence on the Christian character and progress. Feeling his lost and helpless condition in himself, and receiving in confidence the promises of the gospel, the man is led by faith, in the first step of his Christian course, to throw himself upon the faithfulness of God for pardon and justification;—and feeling continually his need of a power that is not in himself, his faith also leads him to rely upon the same faithfulness for all those supplies which he requires for his progress in the divine life. Thus he both lives and walks by faith. That exercise of faith, again, which is the bringing into light of things not seen, tends to place before him, with all the power of present existence, those solemn realities which it is the peculiar province of such faith to bring down upon the mind. It places him, as it were, in

the immediate presence of God, and causes him to feel that each act of life,—each motive of conduct,—each train of thought that is encouraged in the mind, is open to divine inspection, and has a bearing upon his prospects for eternity. In the farther exercise of this faith, he realizes the solemn hour when God shall be revealed in all the dread realities of his character as an inflexible judge,—and in the anticipation of his own appearance to give his account, asks himself seriously what he shall answer. What account has he to give of how he has discharged the various duties of life,—how he has improved the various talents which God has committed to his trust,—how he has watched over the discipline of the soul in its solemn preparation for an eternal being.

Such a realizing view of things not seen, cannot fail to operate as a great moral cause on the mind in which it is habitually cherished as an important part of its spiritual armour. But were the power of faith to stop here, it would only leave the feeble being impressed with a new sense of the dangers with which he is encompassed, and of his own helplessness for meeting them. But it does not leave him thus;—amid all his sense of danger, and all his feeling of weakness, it directs him to a strength that is not

in himself,—a power which is promised to every one that asks it, and which is able to make him more than conqueror over all the enemies of his salvation. By faith relying habitually upon this provision, he experiences that it is a shield by which he is able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked. The more he feels his own weakness, the more does he perceive that his only safety consists in walking humbly and closely with God;—and thus does he experience the import of the apostle's declaration,—"when I am weak, then am I strong."

V. The next part of the armour which the Christian warrior is exhorted to put on, is "the helmet of salvation." This the apostle expresses more fully in another place, by exhorting to "take as an helmet the hope of salvation." Viewed in this sense the subject leads us to that state of mind which constitutes Hope, and to the effect of this mental condition as an encouragement in the spiritual warfare. That operation of mind which constitutes hope may be briefly analysed in the following manner: There is first the desire of attaining some object, founded upon the perception of qualities in it which render it worthy of being sought after. There is then the inquiry whether it is within reach of our attain-

ment. If this appears to be the case, there arises in the mind a state of desire, combined with a sense of pleasure in the anticipation of attainment. This is Hope,—and it proves a great source of encouragement to our efforts for attaining the object desired, and gives new vigour to every exertion;—while the opposite condition, consisting of desire without the prospect of attainment, proves a source of distress, and deadens every effort for attaining it.

In the spiritual life, the first step which determines a man's moral condition, is when his mind is awakened to a due sense of the value of the soul, and the supreme importance of seeking for it salvation and eternal life. These then become the great and leading objects of his desire, and there arises the earnest inquiry, how they are to be attained. While this great question remains unanswered, all is darkness and discouragement within,—all effort seems vain,—and, in proportion to the feeling of the supreme and eternal value of the objects desired, is the sense of anxiety and discouragement. But, when the mighty question is met by the wondrous provisions of the gospel of peace,—when this is seen in all its harmony and all its freeness, a new light breaks in upon the soul. Depression and anxiety give way to hope,—a hope which gives new activity and

vigour to every exertion, and enlargement of heart to run in the way of the divine commandments. It is clear how this state of mind must operate on the whole moral feelings, giving life and activity in every duty, and watchfulness against every source of declension; how a lively sense of the supreme importance of the object sought after, and the lively hope of being able to attain it, will tend to carry a man through much that might otherwise be felt to be laborious service; and how it must prove an important part of the armour of the soul, when the man thus puts on as a helmet the hope of salvation.

Now it is to be particularly remarked, that we are exhorted to cultivate the state of mind which is meant by hope; and here we have to attend to a principle in our nature which presents a subject of much interest. For hope is one of those emotions of the mind over which we have no direct power. We cannot call it forth at our bidding; yet, by the constitution of the mind, it is the result of a process of the understanding which it is entirely in our power to exercise if we will. For an intense contemplation of the value of the object sought after tends, by the constitution of the mind, to give rise to desire;—and an intense contemplation of the means by which it may be attained is calculated to generate hope. Thus we

are brought back to a process of mind which consists simply of attention and reflection, adapted to the importance of the subject. In this manner, when the powers of attention and reflection are fixed with adequate interest on the infinite value of the soul, and the supreme importance of its salvation, this is calculated to produce desire; and when the same powers are directed to the means provided in the gospel for the attainment of this blessing,—this, according to the constitution of the mind, is calculated to give rise to hope, even a "hope that maketh not ashamed."

IV. Having thus referred to that discipline of the mind, in regard to the solemn realities of things not seen, which ought to be carefully cultivated by every one who feels the deep interest of the spiritual warfare, the apostle concludes his exhortation, by directing the attention to the means which are calculated to keep alive upon the mind due impressions of divine things. These are three;—the word of God, prayer, and watchfulness. "Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

It may be safely stated as a principle in human nature, that one of the great sources of the facility with which men yield to temptation, is the want of solemn and serious thought; and, under

the power of the divine Spirit, an important mean of arming the mind, consists in having it occupied with impressions which are hostile to the approach of sin. Hence the supreme importance of cultivating the habit of having the mind habitually provided with such subjects of contemplation, as tend to promote this great purpose. With this view, nothing is so effectual, and at the same time so accessible, as the word of God. Its precepts are available for every step of life,—its admonitions for every duty,—its warnings, against every temptation. "Thy word have I hid in my heart," says the Psalmist, "that I might not sin against thee." And, in that highest of all examples, furnished by our Lord himself in his human nature, of the means by which temptation ought to be combated, his prompt and simple answer to the tempter in all cases was, "it is written." As it is thus a chief safeguard against temptation, it is also a refuge to the soul in every situation in which it can be placed;—"thy statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage;" —"thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it."

And, where but in the records of eternal truth, can we find that which meets the feelings, the wants, and the capacities of the human mind, under every diversity of external condition, and

every variety of mental culture. This points to an adaptation worthy of Him who framed the wondrous fabric, and who alone was capable of providing that which at once was qualified to act as moral causes on its most hidden movements, —and to yield that spiritual food for the soul by which it may be nourished unto everlasting life.

But, at present, we chiefly contemplate the word of God as the sword of the Spirit,—as the offensive armour of the soul in its contests with the enemies of its salvation. The subject is too extensive to be more than alluded to in the most brief and cursory manner. What temptation can assail us either from without or from within, which the soul that is provided with this armour, and trained to its use, may not promptly meet with the denunciation, " thus it is written." How can a man fail to experience upon his mind a solemn impression of the divine character, when he addresses the Eternal One in terms which his own word has provided, " O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me; thou understandest my thought afar off. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, whither shall I flee from thy presence. If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there: If I say surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness

hideth not from thee." Does temptation come from without, "How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God."—Is there a motion of sin within, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Thus the word of God may be employed as the sword of the Spirit, as keeping at a distance the approaches of evil; and its operation is not less important within, upon the heart in which it has fixed its abode. Its first operation there, is represented as that of a two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and proving a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart; discovering to a man what is his real condition in the eye of Him whom external appearances cannot deceive. This painful but salutary discipline being accomplished, the farther operation of this great moral agent is summed up by the inspired writer in a manner the most striking and comprehensive: "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. Moreover by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward."

Thus the word of God presents an adaptation to all the necessities of the soul, and proves an

infallible guide in every step and every emergency of life. Its precepts avail for every line of duty, its warnings tend to repel every kind of temptation. Its promises meet every want and every weakness; and the light and the truth, which beam from every part of it, are calculated to carry the finite and feeble being beyond the sphere of objects of sense, and to conduct him, in high and holy communion, even to the throne of Him who is eternal.

But the sword of the Spirit, thus provided, must be not only worn, but used. Other armour may avail for defence, by being simply put on; but a sword is useless without an arm that has power to wield it. So the word of God must not only be known and understood, but it must be made the subject of habitual, frequent, and serious reflection; it must be put forth, as it were, and applied to every emergency of life, and every process of discipline of the heart. It must be so employed with earnest and habitual aspiration after a power from the Spirit of all grace, through whose aid alone it can be made effectual for these mighty purposes. Thus shall it indeed prove the sword of that Spirit,—the defence of the soul against all its spiritual enemies and the daily mean of its growing sanctification.

VII. Accordingly, the apostle continues his exposition of the Christian armour, by enforcing the importance of earnest, habitual, persevering prayer;—"praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit." That incomprehensible One who searcheth the heart, requires not, indeed, to be informed either of our wants or our desires. The most hidden movements of the soul are open to his view;—and our spiritual necessities are better known to him than they are to ourselves. But he looks for a sense of these wants, and an expression of these necessities, as means of communication with himself, and as an essential part of that intercourse to which he condescends to invite the weary and burdened spirit. And how must it solemnize this intercourse when we reflect, that all these wants are known to him before they are uttered;—that he has marked every step in our history, has witnessed each train of thought, and emotion of the mind, by which that mind has gone astray from himself;—and yet, with a father's tenderness, invites our return, with the assurance, not only of forgiveness, but of the bestowment of moral health to the soul;—"return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." How can the cultivation of such intercourse fail to produce upon the mind an awe of the divine presence, and the

divine character,—and a constantly renewed sense of our own weakness, and helplessness, and sin. The influence is familiar to every one which is produced by the presence and intimate converse of men of exalted virtue, whom, at the same time, we reverence and love;—and such, but in a much higher degree, must be the influence produced upon the soul by habitual intercourse with God. Independently, indeed, of any actual expression of want, or any actual solicitation of spiritual blessings, there must be, in this very converse itself, a moral influence of the most exalted nature. It must lead to a sense to which a man is otherwise a stranger, of the divine presence and divine perfections, and to a solemn awe under the impression that God understandeth even our thoughts afar off. It must lead to some feeling of his character in holiness, and justice, and truth; and thus must naturally give rise to a sense of our own sinfulness in his sight. When we come before him confessing our sins, and expressing our spiritual wants, unless these are mere words of the most empty formality, we must in some degree look within, and make mention before him of those defects of our character, and those destructive habits of the mind, which we feel have retarded our progress in the divine life, or kept us at a distance from God. And how can these

impressions be more fixed and deepened than by confessing them before him to whom they have been well known, when we thought little of their destructive influence, but were indulging them without fear. It is when a man thus draws near to God, with some feeling of the words which he addresses to the Searcher of hearts, it is then that he cannot fail to make discoveries of his own character, and his own moral condition, to which, under other circumstances, he had paid little attention. Does he say to God, in words which he himself has provided, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me;" can he do so without endeavouring himself to look into that heart, and observing what is the habitual current of these thoughts, and thus deriving some impression of what he really is in the sight of him to whom the whole is open. When the soul thus comes to God with a feeling of its utter helplessness and sin,—when it prostrates itself before that incomprehensible One, with whom it is thus brought into immediate converse, it is then in the condition of which he has given the encouragement to hope, that it is a frame of mind which he will not despise. He puts away from him the proud Pharisee, and the cold formalist, with equal displeasure; but to

the weary and heavy laden spirit he has promised rest.

The solemn periods during which a man retires from the intrusion of external things, and thus places himself alone with God, must therefore be considered as a special and most important part of that discipline of the soul from which it is to derive strength for its combat "with principalities and powers, with the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places."—Such seasons will be sought for by every one who feels at all his moral necessities, and they will be sought for not as duties to be performed, but as privileges to be desired and cherished,—as a great mean of spiritual life,—a chief source of the growth, the defence, the nourishment of the soul.

But independently of those more special and solemn seasons in which a man of prayer retires from external things, and seeks to find himself in the more immediate presence of God,—where there is the habitual sense of the divine presence, there will be the tendency to raise the thoughts to him, even amid the ordinary engagements with objects of sense. Amid the cares, the anxieties, the distractions of life, indeed, this must often be felt to be, as it were, a resting place, a refuge to the soul.—And a consideration at once the most

solemn and encouraging, it certainly is, that, amid any circumstances as to external things, the aspiration of the heart directed to God, may have all the power and all the efficacy of prayer. It is an exercise adapted to every situation in which the feeble being can be placed. For whether distracted with anxieties respecting earthly things, or awed under more solemn apprehensions of things eternal; whether viewing complicated duties in regard to which he perceives his own weakness, or combating with spiritual enemies which are too strong for him, the man feels that he is not alone who thus seeks to "dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple."

VIII. To prayer must be added *Watchfulness;* and this commends itself to the conviction of every one who considers what true prayer really is. If there be the earnest and sincere desire after particular spiritual blessings, there will be besides the act of prayer, the habitual cherishing of desire after these blessings; and in the desire so cherished, there may be in fact all the essence of prayer. There will then be the watching for the answer of prayer, as most naturally connected with such cherished desire; and

from this there will also result the diligent use of all the means in our power which seem likely to promote the objects desired. And it may be safely asserted, that prayer, without this course of mental operations, is an empty form which can never profit. Is the prayer, again, for deliverance from the power of any enslaving sin, or from the influence of any habit of the mind which is felt to be destructive of the health of the soul,—if the prayer has any character of sincerity, it must be accompanied by a sense of the eternal importance of the deliverance which is sought for; this will be followed by a cherished desire for it, and this, if it have any reality, will lead to a watchful effort against those propensities, and those habits of the mind which are felt to be endangering the highest interests of the moral being. Upon these mental principles, watchfulness may be considered as arising out of cherished desire; —and prayer followed by such desire, and by an habitual sense of the value of the blessings which are sought for, may be stated as constituting that condition which the apostle means to designate when he says, "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance."

The particular blessings, or particular deliverances, which are thus to be made the subjects of

prayer, followed by desire and watchfulness, must differ according to the experience of different individuals; and therefore it is impossible to allude to them in a more particular manner. But in regard to the great subject of Christian watchfulness in general, there are some leading considerations which are applicable to all, and which will be carefully acted upon by those who feel the eternal importance of this great department of the Christian warfare. These may be briefly alluded to under the following heads,—referring to propensities of character to be guarded against, and others to be cultivated with persevering care.

(1.) Watch over HABITS. These, I need not remark, arise out of individual acts, when such acts have been repeated to a certain extent. Habits thus formed, vary exceedingly in their nature, and in the influence which they exert over the moral condition; but every one who has paid any attention to this most solemn inquiry must admit, that their influence is most extensive. I allude not here to habits of intemperance, or of any other kind of vicious indulgence: in regard to these there can be no hesitation in pronouncing on their ruinous power;—but to habits, which, though not properly to be considered as belonging to this class, may yet be exerting a destructive

influence on the proper discharge of the duties of life, and on the culture of the soul for the life which is to come. Thus there may be habits of indolence, which interfere alike with active duties, and with habits of reflection and devotion. There may be habits of luxurious indulgence, which, though far removed from intemperance, yet indispose or incapacitate for calm and serious thought. There are habits of irregularity and mismanagement of time, which interfere at once with duties and with leisure for reflection; and there are habits of bustling activity and engrossment with the pursuits, or it may be, the frivolities of life, which enchain the soul as the willing bondslave of the things which perish. Habits the reverse of all these will be carefully cherished by every one who feels as he ought, the supreme importance of eternal things. Study then to cultivate habits of activity and diligence, especially in the use of those means which, under the divine Spirit, serve to the culture of the moral being;—habits of regularity in the study of the word of God,—of reflection and serious thought upon its meaning and tendency,—and regular habits of devotion. Cultivate habits of regularity and economy of time,—and of improving fragments of time which are so often allowed to run to waste,—habits of such moderation in living, as shall strengthen the body with-

out oppressing it,—habits of method,—of doing things at their proper times,—and of having for each portion of time its appropriate occupation.

(2.) Watch more especially and carefully over the habits and processes of the mind. It is in these that a man may read his moral condition; and, whatever be his character in the estimation of men, it is in these that his position may be said to consist as a moral being. And as all mental habits grow out of individual acts or processes of the mind, fostered and encouraged to a certain extent, we learn the infinite importance of watching over all such mental processes,—as we cannot tell what degree of indulgence of them may engender a habit, which shall fix itself indelibly on the constitution of the mind. In all such cases each separate act is gone into with less effort than the one which preceded it, until, step by step, the habit is formed which is perpetuated without any effort at all. In this manner a man may allow his mind to glide gradually, and almost insensibly, into habits of listless inactivity, in which it is engrossed with the trifles of the passing hour; or into habits of morbid activity, in which the fancy frames for itself visions and delusions as empty as dreams,—it may be with images of an impure and degrading nature, which tend to vitiate every feeling and principle of the soul. And even inde-

pendently of any such actual depravity and corruption of the processes of the mind, the mental habits may be such as fix it under the power of the things of time, to the total exclusion of any correct impression of the overwhelming interest of the things which are eternal. Among the characters of those of whom the apostle says, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, is, that they "mind earthly things." "To be carnally minded," says the same apostle, "is death."

The means of correcting all such destructive habits of the mind are to be found in the careful culture of habits which have an opposite tendency. And as the bad habits grow out of individual acts, so also will they fall before individual acts and processes of a proper kind, as these shall gradually grow into habits which are worthy of the high destinies of an immortal being. The subject is too extensive to be discussed at length, but there are a few leading points which it may be desirable to keep in view, and which, under a dependence on the divine Spirit, will be carefully cultivated by every one who feels the deep importance of this department of christian watchfulness.

(3.) Cultivate the habit of realizing the presence of God, and of committing the way to him in every process of the mind, and every act of life.

It is given as the peculiar characteristic of the saints in ancient times, that "they endured as seeing him who is invisible." And what would be the effect upon the whole character, if the habitual language of the heart in every decision of life were, "thou, God, seest me;" if its habitual tendency were to look to him for counsel, for direction, for strength;—if, in every situation of doubt, perplexity, or temptation, the man were promptly to say to himself,—God is my witness,—what, in the circumstances in which I am now placed, will be most pleasing to him. When such has become the established habit of the mind, this is to "walk with God." The man who has made the high attainment, may look with humble confidence for a communication of divine aid, proportioned to every want,—for direction in every step of life, and for grace adapted to the higher concern,—the discipline of the soul for a life which is to come. In regard to the things of earth, he is raised above the corroding anxieties of those, who, while they seek the world as their portion, are yet passing through it without a guide. In all that can happen to him amid the transient concerns of this life, he traces the hand of one who cannot err,—and, with the feelings of meek and filial reverence, only says, "My Father, who art in heaven, thy will be done."

(4.) As an important mean of cultivating these mental habits, be diligent to have the mind well stored with the word of God,—to make it the subject of habitual earnest reflection, and to bring its maxims to bear upon every transaction of life. This subject has already been referred to. As a mean of Christian watchfulness nothing can be more efficient, and, at the same time, more accessible, than a simple appeal to what is written. This is calculated to afford occupation of the deepest interest to the most enlarged and cultivated mind; and, on the other hand, it is remarkable to observe how the inspired writer even enjoins, as an improving exercise in the Christian life, the humblest process of which the mind is capable—the simple repetition of the word of God, "speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs." It seems not unreasonable to believe that such an exercise might be one of the intentions of the poetical parts of scripture. It is adapted to minds least cultivated and least accustomed to reflection or thought, and yet is an occupation from which they may derive spiritual improvement; "the entrance of thy word giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple."

(5.) Cultivate the habit of looking steadily within,—of inquiring what is your moral condi-

tion in the sight of God,—what are the propensities of character which seem most to retard your spiritual progress,—and what care you are bestowing upon deliverance from their power. In what degree are you using the armour of God against the enemies of the soul; with what serious earnestness are you watching unto prayer. Study earnestly the comparative states of your moral condition; watch for progress of character. Are you becoming more under the power of eternal things,—or more devoted to, and engrossed with, the concerns of earth. Is your mind becoming more under the impression of the Divine presence, and more disposed to seek after intercourse with God; or does it more readily betake itself to earthly things, or to visions of its own formation as empty as dreams. Whenever the great principle has been established in the heart, it spreads like leaven;—there must be progress;—where there is no progress, there is no life. Watch, therefore, earnestly for progress. At certain seasons of reflection, have you perceived propensities of character, which you felt were endangering the highest interests of the soul;—and have you formed resolutions against them;—have you, it may be, prayed against them;—and, at the next season of serious thought, have you been compelled to acknowledge that

you have made no progress in the contest;—what is the cause? Is it not want of watchfulness? Has not the conviction been forced upon you, that you have voluntarily given way to those propensities, against which you had formed some feeble resolutions, and against which you had also professed to pray? But you feel that you had prayed without watching. Such, be assured, will be the discovery; but do not despair. Return to the spiritual contest,—pray more earnestly, and more perseveringly,—and watch more assiduously. Look more frequently and more searchingly within. Be earnest:—be diligent;—the concern is mighty, the salvation of the soul;—the armour is infallible, the whole armour of God. Use it with diligence, and the victory is sure.

(6.) Cultivate earnestly in the daily walks of life the character and conduct which accord with the high morality of the gospel of Christ; and seek after a growing conformity to his example. As one great mean of this, cultivate the habit of placing yourself in the situation of others, and so, with tender interest, entering into their wants, their cares, their feelings, and their sorrows. "Blessed," says the inspired writer, "is he that *considereth* the poor,"—that enters into their circumstances and wants with feeling, inte

rest, and kind consideration. This is the mental act; the necessary care will follow of course. But it is not to the poor alone that this exercise applies. It is required in every relation of life, and is the source of all that is kind and friendly, considerate, and tender-hearted towards all men. Cultivate diligently the habits of kindness, meekness, forgiveness, self-denial, and peace-making. Study the sublime morality of the gospel of Christ; and especially study his own example. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. He was meek and lowly in heart; —he went about doing good. He sought not his own things, but the good of others. He humbled himself, that he might achieve the great work of redemption. Let the same mind be in you. Let every selfish principle be mortified; let each day find you embracing every opportunity of doing good, both to the bodies and to the souls of men,—and eagerly seeking after such opportunities as that loved and chosen path in which you delight to follow the steps of the Redeemer. In all your intercourse with men, cultivate earnestly that charity which "suffereth long and is kind,—which envieth not,—vaunteth not itself,—is not puffed up,—doth not behave itself unseemly,—seeketh not her own,—is not easily provoked,—thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not

in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;—beareth all things,—believeth all things,—hopeth all things,—endureth all things."—Such was the man Christ Jesus; and such it becomes his disciples to be. The more earnestly they aspire after conformity to his likeness, the more will they feel their deficiency and weakness, and their daily need of that Spirit of all grace whom he has promised; but the more also are they warranted to expect this aid; and the more may they hope to experience in their spiritual history, that, putting on the whole armour of God, "they are able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand."

THE MESSIAH

AS AN EXAMPLE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THINK ON THESE THINGS,"
"THE CONTEST AND THE ARMOUR,"
&c.

FIFTH THOUSAND.

EDINBURGH:
WILLIAM WHYTE AND COMPANY,
BOOKSELLERS TO THE QUEEN DOWAGER;
LONGMAN AND CO. LONDON; W. COLLINS, GLASGOW;
AND W. CURRY JUN. AND CO. DUBLIN.

1842.

EDINBURGH: BALFOUR AND JACK.

THE

MESSIAH AS AN EXAMPLE.

In contemplating that "mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh," we have to keep in mind, that the Messiah, in assuming our nature, had two distinct objects to accomplish, both of which were essential to his great work as Mediator. The one was to bear the weight of divine justice, in the character of an atoning sacrifice for sin;—the other was to yield a perfect obedience to the divine law, in the room of those whom he came to save. This latter part of his work as Mediator required that he should assume our nature, bear all its infirmities, and be subjected to all its trials and temptations,—and in that nature triumph over them all. He thus also accomplished a double purpose;—he fulfilled this important part of his own mediatorial work,—and he left us an example that we should follow his steps, both in his manner of meeting temptation, and in his

whole character and conduct in life. In studying the character of the Messiah, therefore, as an example, it becomes us to consider him, as he is presented to us in these two aspects, both of supreme importance to us,—as suffering temptation without yielding to its power,—and as exhibiting, in all the relations of life, the pure and perfect condition of the moral nature of man.

PART I.

THE MESSIAH UNDER TEMPTATION.

MATTHEW iv. 1—11.

THAT the Messiah in his human nature was subjected to temptation, is one of those facts in his marvellous history which we must receive simply as it is revealed to us,—without attempting to exercise our own speculations, respecting either the means, or the agent, by which it was effected. The mysterious and incomprehensible character of it, in these respects, does not in any degree interfere with the important lessons which the subject is calculated to convey, in two leading considerations,—the nature of these temptations,—and the means by which they were combated.

§ I. THE FIRST TEMPTATION.

"AND when the tempter came to him, he said, if thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, it is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

In entering upon the consideration of the first temptation, we may derive some light, by referring to the connection of the passage which our Lord employed in his answer to the tempter. In the eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, Moses thus addresses the Israelites, in the prospect of taking possession of the promised land, and in the review of all the way by which God had led them in their wanderings through the wilderness: "All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers. And thou shalt remember all the way by which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no. And he

humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know, that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live."

From a remote period, God had promised to their fathers, that he would bring the Israelites into the land of Canaan, and establish them there as a great people. As an important step towards the fulfilment of this promise, he had delivered them out of Egypt by a series of miraculous dispensations, which marked in an indisputable manner the immediate operation of his hand. In their progress through the wilderness, he had kept them in circumstances which were a continual trial of their faith in his promise, and their reliance on his unceasing care. They were made to feel, that, for the supply of their daily food, they could not provide for themselves by any industry of their own, but were thrown continually upon God for a supply of their wants in a miraculous manner. Thus they were humbled, being made to feel their weakness, and their inability to do any thing for themselves in the very peculiar circumstances in which they were placed. The least reflection upon these circumstances ought to have convinced them, that they were instruments in the hand of

God in carrying forward a scheme of providence, and one in which his hand was displayed in a special and peculiar manner,—a scheme involving the fulfilment of the promise to Abraham, that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed.

Their duty, under a dispensation so very peculiar, was not to murmur at the circumstances in which God had placed them, but to submit themselves with humility, reverence, and faith, to all the way by which he was leading them,—considering their personal gratifications as of secondary importance, when viewed in connexion with the great purposes which he was carrying on by means of them. They did not thus submit themselves to the appointments of God;—they rebelled against the course by which he was leading them, demanding personal gratifications which he had not thought proper to allow them. They thus subjected themselves to his displeasure, and to the sentence which he sent forth against them, that those who had so rebelled should die in the wilderness. In this manner they were made to feel the danger of preferring their personal desires to the course of duty which God had assigned to them;—and there was strongly impressed upon them the important truth, that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

There was a considerable analogy between the case of the Israelites, now referred to, and the circumstances in which the Messiah was placed at the commencement of his life of obedience and suffering. He had entered upon a mighty undertaking, every part of which was essential to the accomplishment of the whole. After his youth had been spent in comparative obscurity, he was now entering upon that course of life, in which his work as Mediator was more peculiarly to consist. An important part of this was, that he should be subjected to temptation, and triumph over it in all its parts. In this a double purpose was to be accomplished. He was to pass through an important part of the work assigned to him in his mediatorial character;—and he was to leave his people a bright example of how temptation was to be combated. In this part of his trial, he was made to endure hunger, and he suffered from it as any other man would suffer. The object of the tempter was, to make him rebel against this part of the course which his heavenly Father had prescribed for him, in prosecuting that mighty dispensation which he had undertaken to accomplish;—and the temptation was, to call in his own power as God to relieve this part of his sufferings as man. Had the temptation been given way to, this would have

implied,—a want of confidence in God regarding the course which had been assigned to the Messiah to go through,—a want of reliance on the aid which had been promised him in that course,—and specially and particularly, it would have implied a shrinking from the great work which he had undertaken, whenever he began to experience from it an interference with his personal comfort. Most aptly, therefore, does he employ, in repelling the temptation, the words which Moses addressed to the Israelites,—implying that a man's duty in every instance, is, to mark the course which God has assigned to him, and not to shrink from it on account of any considerations of a personal nature;—in all cases to take for his guide, not his own inclinations as to personal comfort, or personal interest, but "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Thus was the temptation skilfully made;—and thus was it promptly repelled by an immediate reference to the word of God. Though, in one sense, the subject refers only to the circumstances in which the Messiah was placed, it is fraught with most important instruction.

I. We learn how temptation ought, in all cases, to be combated, by an immediate appeal to the

word of God, "thus it is written." As this, indeed, is the only method by which temptation can be resisted with effect, it is also that alone by which it can be met on those high principles which are worthy of such a contest. We may suppose a man, when exposed to a particular temptation, considering how the yielding to it would be likely to affect his health, his interest, or his character in the estimation of other men; —and it is probable that such reasoning may, and often does, prevail against various temptations. But this is not to overcome temptation,—it is to balance one selfish feeling against another. Widely opposed to all such parleying with evil, is the high and simple rule of an immediate reference to the will of God. And as this is the only true resource of the soul under temptation, it is the only effectual one. For whenever we approach such a subject by any speculations of our own, a train arises in the mind, which, before we are aware of it, may have turned the inclination in favour of evil. And even though the actual deed should be prevented by motives of any such description, the purity of the mind has been injured, and the next temptation may find it in a condition more prepared to be assailed and conquered.

It was thus that our first parents fell. On

them also the attack was made in an insidious and artful manner. It was a temptation to violate a positive command of God, on the ground of important benefits to be derived from the violation;—and it was coupled with the insinuation of a doubt of the truth of God as to the penalty which he had declared against the transgression, —"ye shall not surely die." Had this insinuation been met, as in the case of the Messiah, by a simple and decided appeal to the command of God, the temptation would have been at an end. But, on the suggestion of important benefits to be derived from the transgression, the woman allowed her mind to entertain the subject;—and her imagination went out upon the advantages which were promised. The attention being thus fixed upon these alleged advantages, there next succeeded desire,—and then was decided her moral destiny, for the balance was then turned in favour of transgression. She saw that the tree was good, and that *it was to be desired* to make one wise. In this desire consisted her fall;—the actual transgression was its natural consequence. And thus will it be with every one who meets temptation on any other principle than asking himself what is the will of God. If he takes this high and simple course, he will find in the word of God a guide adapted to every situation in

which he can be placed. No temptation can assail him either from spiritual enemies without, or corrupt affections within, which he may not promptly meet by the denunciation,—"thus it is written." Such was the experience of the Psalmist,—"Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee."

This simple and effectual rule for meeting temptation is adapted to every class of inducements to evil; and it tends to prevent the moral feelings from being degraded by an appeal to motives of an inferior kind, which have been already referred to. Such motives, we have seen, may in many instances, preserve from temptation, but in a manner which cannot be employed without leaving a stain upon the mind. And besides this, it is to be remembered, that there is a class of transgressions which such motives cannot reach in any degree;—those sins which elude the eye of man,—those iniquities of the heart which are open only to Him who seeth in secret. These can be restrained and conquered by no secondary motives. He who would contend with them, must have recourse to a direct appeal to the will of God;—and feeling deeply his own weakness in the mighty contest, he will soon perceive the necessity of throwing himself upon a power which is not in man, but a power which is pro-

mised to every one that asks it, to make him conqueror over all his spiritual enemies, "through him that loved us."

When this course is not followed;—when iniquity in the heart is allowed to retain its command of the imagination, it next fixes itself in the desires, and the moral purity of the mind breaks down before it. And it is here most important to observe how the powers of judging then become impaired respecting the moral aspect of the favoured sin, and respecting the sentence which God has pronounced against it. That bold denial of the truth of God by which the tempter imposed upon our first parents, is precisely the sophism by which men deceive themselves to their eternal destruction. They go on in a course of forgetfulness of God and of his law, with his word in their hand, and a voice within, which often warns them that they are departing from the living God. They do not hazard the bold assertion that the course they are pursuing is according to his will,—nor does it meet the approbation of their own conscience, when, in certain seasons of reflection, they listen to the warnings of that monitor within. But they still speak peace to themselves, under a certain undefined reliance on the mercy of God, which, when fairly analyzed, amounts to nothing less

than the ancient sophism, "ye shall not surely die." Neither will they assert, if the question is distinctly proposed to them, that God is a being of undistinguishing mercy, who will depart from all the laws which he has made; for this they perceive would be entirely inconsistent with the character of a Moral Governor. But still there is with them an accommodating standard of mercy, which stretches out before them so as always to include themselves,—and, respecting their own condition, the delusive fallacy still writhes itself around their moral perceptions,—"ye shall not surely die."

II. The second lesson which we learn from this part of the Messiah's history, is,—that, in all cases, we must be ready to sacrifice our personal desires, feelings, and interests, when called upon to do so by our duty to God, and a conscientious performance of the work which he has given us to do. Men are too apt to imagine, that, if they discharge the requirements of justice, and, to a certain extent, the offices of benevolence, towards their fellow-men, they are at liberty to gratify, with little restraint, the principles of self-love,—to promote in various ways their own ease, interest, and gratification. But the example of the Messiah places before them a higher standard,—the

principle of pure devotedness to God, before which every selfish principle will fall, whenever the two sources of action come to be in any degree opposed to each other. The exalted tone of character and feeling, thus arising, will lead a man earnestly to inquire, how he can promote the glory of God, and the highest interests of man; —what are the talents which have been committed to him, and for the improvement of which he must give an account of his stewardship;— what are the various means of usefulness, by which he can follow the footsteps of his divine Master, and manifest towards him the spirit of devotedness and love;—what works can he perform, what sacrifices can he make, in the service of One who has redeemed him to God by his blood.

III. From this subject we learn farther, that the part of our constitution which is sustained by "bread," ought to hold a place in our estimation very subordinate to the object which claims our first and highest regard,—the culture of the moral being for the life which is to come. For this high purpose, God has provided us with special means, and special assistance, calculated to promote our spiritual improvement, and our growing conformity to his own image. Whoever feels as

he ought the supreme importance of these concerns, will have forcibly impressed upon him the truth of the declaration, "that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

IV. At this part of the subject, we may remark, in reference to temptation in general,—that there are principles of our nature to which every kind of temptation is more particularly directed. These principles are parts of our mental constitution, and intended to answer important purposes in our social and moral relations. I allude to such principles as self-love, love of approbation, desire of distinction, and various others of the same class, which are usually considered by writers in moral science, as primary elements of human nature. To answer their proper purposes in the constitution of man, they require to be kept under the strict control of conscience, and the great principle of duty to God. When they break from under these restraints, as in our fallen state they are so apt to do, they degenerate into those which are so familiar to us as the fallen propensities of our nature. Self-love, which is intended to promote our preservation and necessary comfort, then degenerates into selfishness, or low selfish indulgence; and the other principles degenerate in the same

manner, both in the objects to which they are devoted, and the means by which the attainment of them is sought for. According to these views, we may remark, that the first temptation of the Messiah appears to have been directed to self-love;—and the temptation was, to gratify it in a manner which was inconsistent with the circumstances in which he was then placed in his state of humiliation. In the same manner, it would appear that the second temptation was directed to the desire of distinction, and the temptation was to gratify this by means which were unwarrantable. Next to self-love this may be considered as one of the most powerful principles of our nature. We see it carrying before it every other feeling,—giving rise to the most unparalleled exertions, and even overcoming self-love itself. Men will run into any danger, encounter any difficulty, submit to any privation and suffering, and even expose themselves to the danger of death, for the sake of distinction;—and the tempter appears to have expected to find this propensity as strong in the Messiah, as he knew it to be in other men.

In regard to Self-love, which appears to have been more particularly addressed in the first temptation, we cannot fail to perceive, how carefully it ought to be watched over, and how much it tends,

if not duly regulated, to interfere with the high principle of devotedness to God. It is opposed to every self-denying duty,—and to every thing in which we are called to prefer the interests of others to our own, or to sacrifice our own ease or interest, to a sense of our duty to God, or our duty to man. It is often opposed to a full and perfect exercise of the benevolent affections, which ought to lead us to place ourselves in the situation of others, and to seek how we may promote their comfort, and their good. It is opposed to the forgiveness of injuries, which must require a sacrifice of selfish feeling;—and it must often be in danger of interfering with that brotherly-kindness and charity which hold so important a place in the high morality of the gospel of Christ. Thus the principle of self-love, when allowed to usurp an undue influence, tends to every thing that is unworthy of a healthy moral condition. The strict regulation of it holds a most important place in the sound culture of the moral being,—and is often referred to in scripture, as a leading object of attention to every one who aspires to that high attainment,—the imitation of the example of Jesus. On various occasions he has himself delivered the brief, but solemn declaration,—"if any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself."

§ II. SECOND TEMPTATION.

"THEN the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple; and saith unto him,—if thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written, he shall give his angels charge concerning thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, it is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

The second temptation, like the first, was met by a prompt appeal to the word of God. Let us, as in the former instance, trace the circumstances to which the expression, quoted by the Messiah, refers. In the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy, Moses is impressing upon the Israelites the conduct which it was their duty to observe towards God, in the prospect of entering the promised land. After a variety of injunctions, he adds at the 16th verse,—"ye shall not tempt the Lord your God, as ye tempted him in Massah."—The tempting of God in Massah is related in Exodus xvii. 1—7. The Israelites, in their journey, had arrived at Rephidim;—they found there on water, and they began to suffer from thirst. Their

condition, at this time, was altogether most peculiar. By mighty signs and wonders, which had struck terror into the whole land of Egypt, they had recently been delivered from the bondage of the Egyptians. In a miraculous manner the sea had been divided before them;—a constant and standing evidence of the presence of God had been placed within their sight, in the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, which accompanied them in all their journey;—and their food was provided in a miraculous manner, by the daily descent of the precise quantity which was required for their support. With such manifest evidence continually before them, that they were under the special and peculiar guidance of God, their duty evidently was, when they met with a want of water, to stand still in reverent expectation, that God would also supply this want, whenever the time came when he thought right to do so. Instead of this, they murmured against Moses, saying,—"wherefore is it that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us, and our children, and our cattle, with thirst."—The want was soon miraculously supplied, but it is added,—"Moses called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying,—"is the Lord among us or not."

What is here called "tempting the Lord," appears therefore, to mean,—putting to the trial his patience and forbearance by their want of confidence in his power to relieve them, after all the proofs he had so recently given that he was among them in a special and most peculiar manner,—and, as it were, calling in question whether he was really among them, because he had not instantly supplied them with water. Or perhaps they might be considered as impatiently calling upon him for this proof of his being really among them,—thus setting aside all the proofs he had already given them, and presumptuously challenging him to this additional evidence. It seems to be as if they had said, let him do this and we will acknowledge his power to perform what he has promised,—as the Jews said of the Saviour, on another remarkable occasion, "let him come down from the cross, and we will believe."

At the time when the temptations of the Messiah took place, he had spent about thirty years in a mean and low condition, scarcely known except as the carpenter's son. He had come into the world to assume the high character of the Redeemer of Israel, but nothing had occurred during this long period, to point him out to the Jewish nation as any thing more than an ordinary man, excepting the single event of

his baptism, when a voice from heaven proclaimed him as the beloved Son of God. This, however, does not appear to have attracted much notice among the people. The nature of the temptation, therefore, appears to have been this ;—If you are indeed the Son of God, and the promised Messiah, as you profess to be, why do you not make yourself known as such by some act which will convince the nation, so that they may believe in you. Here is an opportunity for doing so ;—throw yourself from this pinnacle, and alight unharmed amid the multitude below, (in the court of the temple, a place of great resort,) and they will immediately do homage to you as the Messiah. Let God also thus give testimony to your pretensions, by preserving you in doing so,—as he has promised to preserve the Messiah in all circumstances, that he may not even dash his foot against a stone.

The answer of the Saviour seems to imply :—In the prosecution of my work as Mediator, I am pursuing a course which my Father has assigned to me. When his time comes, means will be taken for giving evidence of my character ;—till then, it is not for me to attempt this purpose by a rash and unwarranted act such as you propose. I am indeed promised his special protection in the prosecution of this work, but I am not autho-

rized to throw myself unnecessarily into circumstances of danger, so as to challenge him to this display of his promised support; as it is written,—"thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

The principles thus brought before us in the second temptation are again full of the most important instruction.

I. We see, as in the former instance, the temptation met by a prompt and instant appeal to the word of God. There is no entertaining of the subject,—no consideration of the benefits promised. The answer is simply, "It is written." In the same manner we may often be placed in circumstances, in which courses of conduct are presented to us that seem to promise important benefits,—and we feel in doubt whether it would be desirable to prosecute them or not. Our first inquiry in all such cases ought to be,—what is most in accordance with our duty to God, and the high principle of devotedness to him. If a man, in all cases of doubt, commences with this inquiry, and with a sincere desire to be guided by it, he will seldom err in judgment respecting the course which, in any instance, he ought to pursue.

II. We learn the regulation and control of a

principle of our nature of most extensive influence,—the desire of distinction and pre-eminence among men. To a certain extent this is a legitimate source of action, provided it be kept under strict subjection to higher principles. It is blameable, when it becomes itself the leading rule of conduct, keeping out of view, or interfering with, the great principle of devotedness to God. To learn the importance of a due regulation of this principle, indeed, we have only to look at those who have given up their minds to the desire of distinction, as their leading object in life. From the man who grasps at being master of the world, and carries misery and desolation before him in his course of ruthless ambition,—to him who frets and wearies himself for eminence in a humbler sphere, the principle is the same. It is a restlessness of their nature, which leads men never to be satisfied with their present lot, but to labour after some distinction among their fellows,—something that will be the admiration or the envy of those around them. For this they toil and labour,—for this they disquiet themselves, neglecting alike, it may be, present duties, and present comforts. The course is attended with emulation, jealousy, and envy, directed against those who cross them in their path,—and the failure produces similar passions against those fortunate rivals who have

supplanted them in the world's estimation. Even the attainment, perhaps, disappoints their hopes, and they find, when their laborious course is over, that they have been toiling for that which cannot satisfy. To all such the exhortation addressed by the Messiah is,—"Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls."—Retire from a course which presents nothing but tumult and disappointment;—be satisfied with the lot which Providence has assigned to you, in your short and uncertain state of moral discipline;—rest not even in its comforts, if such it presents to you, but study with anxious care its high and varied duties, and its solemn responsibilities. Seek above all things an acquaintance with God,—peace with him,—and growing devotedness to his service. The pursuit will bring with it neither disquiet nor disappointment;—it will carry peace in its daily course, and in its accomplishment life eternal.

III. We learn from this subject, that in all cases in which we are encouraged to look for divine assistance, we are to do so in a diligent use of the means which are in our own power,—and are not, in reliance on that aid, presumptuously to place ourselves in the way of danger,—

"thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."—We incur the guilt against which this exhortation is addressed, when we tamper with sin,—when we place ourselves in circumstances in which we are exposed to temptation,—when we bring ourselves under the influence of society, conversation, reading, or circumstances of any description, which have a tendency to corrupt the imagination, or derange the moral feelings. We incur it when we allow the thoughts to wander upon forbidden ground, or meet temptation on any other principle, than a prompt and simple appeal to the word of God, accompanied by aspiration after divine aid. The man who runs heedlessly into temptation, either by external circumstances, or by the allowed wanderings of his own imagination, and then, feeling his danger, seeks this aid from heaven, has no reason to complain if the aid be denied,—for his whole conduct is met by the denunciation,—"thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

But we incur the guilt involved in this expression, not only by voluntarily placing ourselves in circumstances of danger,—but also by neglecting the diligent use of those means which are in our power, towards the culture of the moral being. In this high achievement, indeed, we cannot take one effectual step without an influence from on

high, which alone has power to purify the heart. But this is promised to us in the use of certain means, and in the diligent exercise of powers which we possess as rational beings. We feel that we have the power, however we may want the inclination, to withdraw our thoughts from objects of sense, and to raise them to God,—to contemplate his character and his will,—to bring our conduct under rigid examination on the principles of his law,—to ask ourselves seriously what we are doing, and what preparation we are making for the life which is to come. This we can do, as rational beings, if we will,—and in doing so, with earnest prayer for divine aid, we are encouraged to look for this aid according to our need. But the man who professes to seek this influence, and is not thus putting himself to the work of solemn and serious thought, incurs the guilt implied in the denunciation,—"Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

§ III. THIRD TEMPTATION.

"AGAIN, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, all these things will I give

thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

In the two first temptations of the Messiah, the object of the tempter seems to have been, to produce in him a line of conduct inconsistent with the course which was assigned to him in his mediatorial character. Self-love was appealed to in the first, as opposed to the privations he was suffering,—and the desire of distinction in the second, as opposed to the mean and low condition in which he appeared in the world. This also was accompanied by an attempt to lead him to a presumptuous and unwarranted appeal to that aid from God, which had been promised to attend him through his whole course upon earth. In the third temptation there is a more undisguised appeal to those principles of human nature, which, in their unregulated state, lead men to seek after the wealth, the power, the pleasure, and the splendour of earthly things as their chief good. How many are there to whom these seem to present the only objects thought worthy of being sought after;—and what unhallowed means have they recourse to in the pursuit of them. How often, in this course, do they seem to have forgotten entirely the duty and allegiance which they

owe to God, and appear as if they had actually surrendered themselves avowedly and deliberately to the service of the prince of darkness,—as if they had fallen down and worshipped him. To be satisfied of this, we can appeal to the page of history, and even to our own observation. We can there follow the man of ambition through the course of crime by which he has risen to the eminence that he aspired to,—the man of pleasure through the course of profligacy by which he has pursued his chosen enjoyments,—or the man of avarice through the means by which he has accumulated his gold. All such, and many similar observations serve to shew, that the eager pursuit of worldly things is inconsistent with the spirit of pure and simple devotedness to the divine will,—and that when a man makes up his mind to seek them as his chief good, he voluntarily places himself in circumstances which must lead to the sacrifice of an habitual recognition of the duty and homage which he owes to God. This appears to be what is meant by the tempter when he says,—"if thou wilt fall down and worship me." It is a figurative mode of expression, which probably implies a prostration of mind to the pursuit of earthly enjoyments, and a state of moral feeling which leaves a man ready to sacrifice the principles of devotedness to God, whenever these come in the way

of those objects to which he has devoted himself.

On this view, then, the object of the temptation would appear to be,—to place before the human nature of the Messiah, the allurements of earthly things,—the wealth, the power, the distinction, the enjoyments, to be found in earthly pursuits,—and, along with this, the insinuation that they were to be obtained, but not without some sacrifice of devotedness to God. A man on whom such a temptation took effect, would fix the imagination on the promised good, and make up his mind to the venture ;—that is, to go through with whatever means might be found necessary for carrying his purpose ;—and this prostration of mind appears to be what is meant by falling down and worshipping the tempter. But the answer of the Messiah was as prompt as before, and was now accompanied with an expression of indignation at the baseness of the insinuation ;—"Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."—Thus was the temptation met by the immaculate mind of the Messiah. He entertains not the subject for a moment, not even to point out the worthlessness of the objects which were presented to him. The case does not admit of argument ;—the course is distinct and clear ;—

he will of God is the simple and absolute rule ;—whatever is not in exact consistency with this is sin. God alone is worthy of homage ;—his law is the supreme and only guide, from which there is no appeal, and which admits of no rival.

The practical lesson to be derived from this subject, is addressed more particularly to those who have chosen as their chief good, the wealth, the honours, and the pleasures of life,—and are pursuing them, with little consideration of the pursuits, the duties, and the responsibilities, which are pressed upon them by the supreme authority of God. In the principles by which their conduct is guided, there is no recognition of the will, and no impression of the all-seeing eye of Him who claims their sole allegiance ;—and they must be sensible that their leading object in life is not a desire to be conformed to his law. Other objects occupy their desires, than the approbation of Him who seeth their inmost thoughts ;—other pursuits engage their attention, than the anxiety to be acceptable in his sight. In the views and feelings which regulate their plans in life, there is no acknowledgement of Him who has a right to their undivided homage ;—they, therefore, kneel to another power, and serve another master. To all such the warning comes with deep and solemn im-

port,—"thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve;"—and this is addressed with equal force, whatever may be the false god to whose service they have resigned themselves.

Have you, with all the hardihood of the prince of darkness, devoted yourself to his service, and declared an open rebellion against Him who rules in heaven. Are you, in a course of profanity and vice, despising his law, setting at nought his authority, and pouring contempt upon his name, his character, and his service. With true allegiance to the leader whom you obey, are you not only yourself following this downward course, but contributing to draw others into the same career of folly and of sin. You have all the characters of a faithful and devoted servant;—but remember that you kneel to a power, and serve a master in avowed rebellion against Him who has the sovereign claim to your sole allegiance. Your reward, it may be, is in "the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them;"—but have you calculated the fearful venture. Have you forgotten that He with whom you contend, is the incomprehensible One, whose power is commensurate with his justice, and both are unbounded;—that he marks every step in your path, and every hour of your period of moral discipline, as it glides unheeded over you. And does the solemn truth never meet you in some

moment of sober thought,—that a day is fast approaching, when his character will shine forth in all its fearful attributes, and his arm awake to vengeance.

But perhaps mammon is your god. With calm and uniform purpose you have devoted yourself to the acquisition of wealth; and this pursuit, it may be, has preserved you from a course of headlong folly and vice. It may have been the source of conduct that is fair and honourable, and you are passing through life, with a character of much that is estimable, and nought that is grossly offensive in the eyes of men. But do you worship the Lord your God, and him only do you serve;—do you live under the habitual sense of his presence, and the habitual recognition of his supreme authority;—is his will your diligent study, and the uniform rule of all your doings;—and do you take no step in life, without proposing to yourself the question,—will it be pleasing to God. If your mind bears witness that there is no such acknowledgment of him in your habitual principles of action;—that the usual current of your thoughts and desires is to other objects than those which refer to God and to things eternal;—that your plans and schemes for life are regulated by other views and decided by other motives;—then you must perceive that

you present all the characters of one, who kneels to another power, and serves another master.

The same mode of reasoning, it is evident, applies to all those courses of life, by which men devote themselves to the attainment of temporal objects,—the paths of ambition,—the pursuit of fame,—the desire of distinction,—and even to the quiet unobtrusive course of those, who seek only their own ease, gratification, and enjoyment. With them day after day finds its simple pleasures, or its more exciting amusements; and life passes without any thing that is discreditable according to the maxims of men. But the solemn question recurs,—is this a course adapted to the high responsibilities of a state of moral discipline. Does the individual, who thus glides through life, feel the solemn truth, that each day, as it passes over him, is a portion gone by of that short and uncertain space which is given him to prepare for an eternal being. Does he feel all the dread solemnity of a life that is to come,—does he recognise the reality of that eye which has followed him through every step of his moral history. He can have no adequate feeling of these momentous truths; living only for himself, he presents all the characters of one, who is passing through life entirely regardless of the solemn warning,—"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

PART II.

THE MESSIAH AS AN EXAMPLE OF CONDUCT IN THE VARIOUS RELATIONS OF LIFE.

WHILE the human nature of the Messiah affords a bright example of our resources under temptation, it is no less valuable as a pattern for our imitation in the daily intercourse and various relations of life. On this wide and extensive subject we can here touch but very briefly. The following leading considerations may include some of the points, which, in a practical view, are most deserving of our attention,—and of which numerous illustrations will occur to every one who reads with attention the life of the Saviour.

I. In the whole of the Messiah's conduct upon earth, he uniformly referred to the will of his heavenly Father, as the rule by which he was habitually influenced. "I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of Him thatsent me;—"my meat is to do the will of him that

sent me, and to finish his work." In the prosecution of this great purpose, he threw aside all those personal and selfish feelings by which men are so much influenced. He appeared in a mean and low condition, and took upon him the form of a servant. He sought not his own ease, or honour, or comfort, but the honour of God, and the highest interests of man. If such, through life, was the conduct of him who "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," how is the example binding upon those whom he came to save. The important lesson could not have been more powerfully impressed upon us, that, in our passage through this scene of moral discipline, each has his place assigned to him by the Great Disposer of all things;—and that this place, whether higher or lower, has attached to it duties and responsibilities, for which we must give an account to him who has a right to our absolute homage. In all these, his law is our unerring guide, and he has enforced its requirements by the principle of conscience within us, which, when we listen to its warnings, never fails to plead for God. It is not enough, that a certain feeling of this responsibility preserves from those violations of his law which attract the notice of man. The example of the Messiah points to a standard higher and purer far. It requires

us to have habitually upon our minds a sense of the presence and perfections of God,—and habitually to bring every act, every pursuit, and every desire, to the test of his will. In prosecution of this great purpose, it calls upon us to deny ourselves;—not by monkish austerities, as if he could be pleased by voluntary and useless suffering, but to deny ourselves every selfish desire, and every personal gratification, when these interfere, in any degree, with our duty to him, or our zealous prosecution of the work which he has given us to do. It calls us to seek out, with anxious care, the various duties, and the various means of usefulness, which arise out of the situation in which God has placed us;—to consider the talents which he has given us to be improved for his glory and the good of men;—and to examine ourselves rigidly whether we are improving them in a manner which will stand the test of that dread morning of an eternal day. In all these concerns we are too apt to look to our own ease, interest, and pleasure. The example of the Messiah impresses upon us in the strongest manner, that our leading, our uniform inquiry ought in every instance to be, —what is the will of God,—what is the course of conduct which tends most to promote his glory,—what is that culture of the habits, dispositions, and affections of the mind, which will

bear the scrutiny of his all seeing eye, and the test of the unerring standard of his word,—what is the culture of the whole character, that approaches most nearly to the example which the Messiah has left us, that we should follow his steps.

II. The means adapted for our assistance and guidance in this great design, are strikingly pointed out in the example of the Messiah. He maintained habitual intercourse with God,—he sought solitude and retirement that he might cultivate this converse with his Father in heaven. From the most zealous discharge of his public ministry he retired for devotion; and, disregarding even the personal wants, which, as a man, we know he felt as other men, he spent whole nights in prayer. Even in his last dread agony, when his human nature seemed ready to sink under the prospect of that suffering by which his mighty work was to be accomplished, he still sought refuge in "offering up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared." We cannot doubt that this purpose might have been fulfilled by his own divine nature, had such been the appointment of God. But, if we may dare to speculate on such a subject, we may say,—that thus a high purpose would have been

unaccomplished. He was acting and suffering as a man, and as a man he left us an example how to act, and how to suffer. Let us feel all the weight of this example, and learn how we may advance with safety, with confidence, and with peace, through the solemn scene which is carrying us onward to an eternal state of being. It is by cultivating habitual intercourse with God,—by seeking to feel upon our minds the constant impression of his presence,—by habitually resigning ourselves to his guidance, and committing ourselves to the wisdom and the strength which he alone can give, both for our conduct in this life, and our preparation for the life which is to come.

III. Let us contemplate the Messiah as he appeared in the various duties and relations of ordinary life. As a son he was distinguished by filial reverence,—and even in the midst of his last sufferings, he shewed a tender interest in the comfort of his mother. He had friends, and he warmly felt for their sorrows, and called down his divine power for their relief. He had enemies, and he treated them with forbearance, and with his last breath he prayed for pardon to his murderers. Mark the tender kindness of his heart, as he shed tears over the grave of him whom

he loved,—mark his tender compassion for sinners, as he wept over Jerusalem. Who are the characters that are specified as meeting his particular regard,—the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, the mourner, the pure in heart, the peace-maker, the persecuted, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. Who are among the individuals who are mentioned as engaging his special notice,—the weeping penitent, the mourning widow, the woman who likened herself to a dog that is permitted to eat the crumbs which fall from the children's table, and all who shewed the most unbounded confidence in his compassion and his power.

Whenever he came into contact with men in the ordinary intercourse of life, his chief concern was to relieve their bodily sufferings and minister to their spiritual instruction. When he was faint from thirst, and asked drink of a woman of Samaria, and when she expressed her astonishment that a Jew should ask drink of a Samaritan, he did not press his personal wants, but turned the conversation to her improvement. His divine power was never exerted for his own relief, but very often for the relief of others. He sought out opportunities for administering his benevolence and kindness to man,—he went about doing good. He complained not of the frequency

or the importunity of their claims upon his compassion,—he complained only when they shewed any want of absolute confidence both in his power and his mercy.

In his character as a teacher, observe the searching spirituality of his doctrine, and the uncompromising faithfulness with which he pressed it home to the conscience, without respect of persons, or fear of man. Observe the frequency and earnestness with which he impresses upon his followers love to each other, love to all men, forgiveness and kindness even to their enemies. His common conversation was always directed to the best interests of those who were brought into his society,—and he took advantage of every circumstance, either in passing events or natural objects, from which he could deduce lessons of instruction. "All bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth;"—all were compelled to acknowledge,—"never man spake like this man."

In his whole deportment, he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;—he sought not his own things, but the good of many that they might be saved;—and this high design, to which he had voluntarily devoted himself, he followed out by a course of unwearied benevolence, and patient suffering, till in his last and

greatest agony he could proclaim with triumph,—"It is finished."

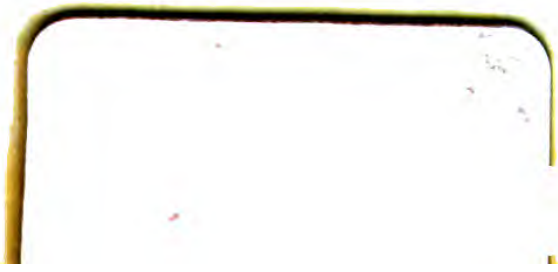
Such was the human nature of the Messiah;—a pattern of all that is pure, and lovely, and of good report,—of all that is gentle, and meek, and lowly,—of all that is kind, and benevolent, and merciful. It was a pattern of self-denial,—of forgiveness of injuries,—of patience amid the contradictions of sinners,—of active usefulness, both to the temporal wants and distresses of men, and to their spiritual necessities.—It was an example of all those kindly feelings of our nature, which are calculated to bind men together in tenderness, condescension, and love. A feeling even for the infirmities of his disciples is represented as a part of his character for which he specially qualified himself in the course of his mediatorial work;—"we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." His tender regard for the feeble ones of his people is represented by a shepherd carrying the lambs in his bosom. He invites the weary and heavy-laden to come to him and find rest,—to take his yoke upon them and learn of him, for he was meek and lowly. Well might the apostle, pleading with the Corinthians, entreat them "by the meekness and gentleness of

Christ." Even the mighty work, by which he made his soul an offering for sin, is held out as a pattern for our imitation, in that disposition of mind which led him to humble himself for the best interests of man ;—"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men ;—and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Let those who profess to bear his name, see that they follow his steps. While they look to him continually both as their righteousness and their strength, let them earnestly watch over their own progress of character, in a growing conformity to the example of Jesus. Habitually studying his character as their pattern,—and habitually relying upon his grace as their strength, they may hope to grow in likeness to his image, and in preparation for the enjoyment of his immediate presence. To those who look earnestly to this example, and aspire after increasing conformity to it as more than any earthly good, it is of comparatively little moment what may be their lot in the present life. They have learned to prize another

good, and to seek another portion. Amid much weakness, and many imperfections, their eye is steadily fixed upon their heavenly leader and guide; and they look forward with humble confidence to the time, when "they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is."

IV. Finally, let us contemplate the Messiah, in his submission to the will of his heavenly Father. We have seen this as it was exemplified in active service;—it was no less remarkable in patient suffering. The pains, distresses, and privations of life, we know he suffered in common with other men, but these he suffered as if he felt them not. He endured also the contradiction of sinners,—he was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. But the only effect which these sufferings had upon his pure humanity was, to make him weep over the blindness and hardness of heart displayed by his persecutors, and pray to his Father to forgive them. One trial, indeed, he was destined to endure, which wrung from his human nature the agonizing cry,—"My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." But the feeling was momentary, and the remedy was prompt as it was powerful,—"not my will, but thine be done."

Instead of rushing, with profane speculation, upon a scene which puts to silence the utmost conceptions of man, let us resign our minds to the high and important lessons which are taught us by the suffering humanity of the Son of God. Are we also called to suffer,—and in our passage through this scene, who can escape from sorrow,—let us look to the example of him who has taught us how to suffer. His trials and sorrows were as a substitute;—ours are the immediate fruits of sin,—but they are designed and calculated to promote our separation from the world, and to minister to our spiritual improvement. Let us learn to acknowledge the hand of that wise, and gracious, and powerful One from whom they proceed,—who regulates their nature and their degree by the great purposes which he designs them to accomplish. The cup which our Father has given us, shall we not drink it. Bitter may be the draught, and deep the repugnance with which it is contemplated by those feelings of our nature which bind us down to present things. But it comes not unsent;—and it comes not in vain, if we receive it as dispensed in love and in wisdom, and be chiefly solicitous to derive from it the important benefits which it is calculated to yield. It is a great moral remedy, under which, when received with proper feelings, we may spe-

cially look for gracious communications of spiritual aid from Him, who seeks by means of it to promote the health of the soul. In a course of active service, there is a tone and an excitement, by which it carries with it its own stimulus, and in a great measure, its own reward. But there is a scene which he who was once humbled, and is now exalted, bends over with tender interest, and views with intense and peculiar regard:—that is, when the meek and patient sufferer, realising the mighty One who sends the dispensation, and receiving it as sent in love and in mercy, bows under a sense of the rectitude of all his doings,—and says in the confidence of filial submission,—"not my will, but thine be done."