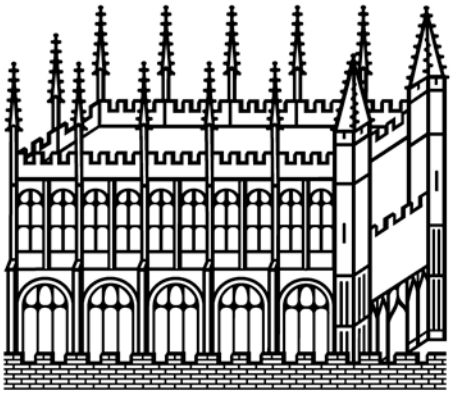

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THE

APPLICATION

OF

CHRISTIANITY

TO THE

COMMERCIAL AND ORDINARY AFFAIRS OF LIFE,

IN A SERIES OF DISCOURSES.

BY

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PREFACE.

THIS volume can be regarded in no other light, than as the fragment of a subject far too extensive to be overtaken within a compass so narrow. There has only a partial survey been taken of the morality of the actions that are current among people engaged in merchandise; and with regard to the morality of the affections which stir in their hearts, and give a feverish and diseased activity to the pursuits of worldly ambition, this has scarcely been touched upon, save in a very general way in the concluding Discourse.

And yet, in the estimation of every cultivated Christian, this second branch of the subject

should be by far the most interesting,—as it relates to that spiritual discipline by which the love of the world is overcome; and by which all that oppressive anxiety is kept in check, which the reverses and uncertainties of business are so apt to inject into the bosom; and by which the appetite that urges him who hasteth to be rich is effectually restrained—so as to make it possible for a man to give his hand to the duties of his secular occupation, and, at the same time, to maintain that sacredness of heart which becomes every fleeting traveller through a scene, all whose pleasures and whose prospects are so soon to pass away.

Should this part of the subject be resumed at some future opportunity, there are two questions of casuistry connected with it, which will demand no small degree of consideration. The first relates to the degree in which an affection for present things, and present interests ought to be indulged. And the second is, whether, on the supposition that a desire after the good things of the present life were reduced down to the standard of the gospel, there would remain

a sufficient impulse in the world for upholding its commerce, at the rate which would secure the greatest amount of comfort and subsistence to its families.

Without offering any demonstration, at present, upon this matter, we simply state it as our opinion, that, though the whole business of the world were in the hands of men thoroughly Christianised, and who, rating wealth according to its real dimensions on the high scale of eternity, were chastened out of all their idolatrous regards to it—yet would trade, in these circumstances, be carried to the extreme limit of its being really productive or desirable. An affection for riches, beyond what Christianity prescribes, is not essential to any extension of commerce that is at all valuable or legitimate; and, in opposition to the maxim, that the spirit of enterprise is the soul of commercial prosperity, do we hold, that it is the excess of this spirit beyond the moderation of the New Testament, which, pressing on the natural boundaries of trade, is sure, at length, to visit every country, where it operates with the recoil of all those calamities, which, in the

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DISCOURSE I.

ON THE MERCANTILE VIRTUES WHICH MAY EXIST WITHOUT THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

"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."—PHILL. iv. 8.

THE Apostle, in these verses, makes use of certain terms, without ever once proposing to advance any definition of their meaning. He presumes on a common understanding of this, between himself and the people whom he is addressing. He presumes that they know what is signified by Truth, and Justice, and Loveliness, and the other moral qualities which are included in the enumeration of our text. They, in fact, had words to express them, for many ages antecedent to the coming of Christianity into the world.

Now, the very existence of the words proves, that, before the gospel was taught, the realities which they express must have existed also. These good and respectable attributes of character must have been occasionally exemplified by men, prior to the religion of the New Testament. The virtuous and the praiseworthy must, ere the commencement of the new dispensation, have been met with in society—for the Apostle does not take them up in this passage, as if they were unknown and unheard of novelties—but such objects of general recognition, as could be understood on the bare mention of them, without warning and without explanation.

But more than this. These virtues must not only have been exemplified by men, previous to the entrance of the gospel amongst them—seeing that the terms, expressive of the virtues, were perfectly understood—but men must have known how to love and to admire them. How is it that we apply the epithet lovely to any moral qualification, but only in as far as that qualification does in fact draw towards it a sentiment of love? How is it that another qualification is said to be

of good report, but in as far as it has received from men an applauding or an honourable testimony? The Apostle does not bid his readers have respect to such things as are lovely, and then, for the purpose of saving them from error, enumerate what the things are which he conceives to possess this qualification. He commits the matter, with perfect confidence, to their own sense and their own apprehension. He bids them bear a respect to whatsoever things are lovely—nor does he seem at all suspicious, that, by so doing, he leaves them in any darkness or uncertainty about the precise import of the advice which he is delivering. He therefore recognizes the competency of men to estimate the lovely and the honourable of character. He appeals to a tribunal in their own breasts, and evidently supposes, that, antecedently to the light of the Christian revelation, there lay scattered among the species certain principles of feeling and of action, in virtue of which, they both occasionally exhibited what was just, and true, and of good report, and also could render to such an exhibition the homage of their regard and of their reverence. At present we shall postpone the direct enforce-

of the recorded virtues, which shed a glory over the remembrance of Greece and of Rome—we fully concede it to the admiring scholar, that they one and all of them were sometimes exemplified in those days of heathenism; and that, out of the materials of a period, crowded as it was with moral abominations, there may also be gathered things which are pure, and lovely, and true, and just, and honest, and of good report.

What do we mean, then, it may be asked, by the universal depravity of man? How shall we reconcile the admission now made, with the unqualified and authoritative language of the Bible, when it tells us of the totality and the magnitude of human corruption? Wherein lies that desperate wickedness, which is every where ascribed to all the men of all the families that be on the face of the earth? And how can such a tribute of acknowledgment be awarded to the sages and the patriots of antiquity, who yet, as the partakers of our fallen nature, must be outcasts from the favour of God, and have the character of evil stamped upon the imaginations of the thoughts of their hearts continually.

In reply to these questions, let us speak to your own experimental recollections on a subject in which you are aided both by the consciousness of what passes within you, and by your observation of the character of others. Might not a sense of honour elevate that heart which is totally unfurnished with a sense of God? Might not an impulse of compassionate feeling be sent into that bosom which is never once visited by a movement of duteous loyalty towards the Lawgiver in heaven? Might not occasions of intercourse with the beings around us, develope whatever there is in our nature of generosity, and friendship, and integrity, and patriotism; and yet the unseen Being, who placed us in this theatre, be neither loved, nor obeyed, nor listened to? Amid the manifold varieties of human character, and the number of constitutional principles which enter into its composition, might there not be an individual in whom the constitutional virtues so blaze forth and have the ascendency, as to give a general effect of gracefulness to the whole of this moral exhibition; and yet, may not that individual be as unmindful of his God, as if the principles of his constitution had been mixed up

in such a different proportion, as to make him an odious and a revolting spectacle? In a word, might not Sensibility shed forth its tears, and Friendship perform its services, and Liberality impart of its treasure, and Patriotism earn the gratitude of its country, and honour maintain itself entire and untainted, and all the softenings of what is amiable, and all the glories of what is chivalrous and manly, gather into one bright effulgency of moral accomplishment on the person of him who never, for a single day of his life, subordinates one habit, or one affection, to the will of the Almighty; who is just as careless and as unconcerned about God, as if the native tendencies of his constitution had compounded him into a monster of deformity; and who just as effectually realizes this attribute of rebellion against his Maker, as the most loathsome and profligate of the species, that he walks in the counsel of his own heart, and after the sight of his own eyes?

The same constitutional variety may be seen on the lower fields of creation. You there witness the gentleness of one animal, the affectionate

fidelity of another, the cruel and unrelenting ferocity of a third; and you never question the propriety of the language, when some of these instinctive tendencies are better reported of than others; or when it is said of the former of them, that they are the more fine, and amiable, and endearing. But it does not once occur to you, that, even in the very best of these exhibitions, there is any sense of God, or that the great master-principle of his authority is at all concerned in it. Transfer this contemplation back again to our species; and under the same complexional difference of the more and the less lovely, or the more and the less hateful, you will perceive the same utter insensibility to the consideration of a God, or the same utter inefficiency on the part of his law to subdue human habits and human inclinations. It is true, that there is one distinction between the two cases; but it all goes to aggravate the guilt and the ingratitude of man. He has an understanding which the inferior animals have not—and yet, with this understanding does he refuse practically to acknowledge God. He has a conscience, which they have not—and yet, though it whisper in the ear of his inner man the

claims of an unseen Legislator, does he lull away his time in the slumbers of indifference, and live without him in the world.

Or go to the people of another planet, over whom the hold of allegiance to their Maker is unbroken—in whose hearts the Supreme sits enthroned, and throughout the whole of whose history there runs the perpetual and the unfailing habit of subordination to his law. It is conceivable, that with them too, there may be varieties of temper and of natural inclination, and yet all of them be under the effective control of one great and imperious principle; that, in subjection to the will of God, every kind and every honourable disposition is cherished to the uttermost; and that in subjection to the same will, every tendency to anger, and malignity, and revenge, is repressed at the first moment of its threatened operation; and that, in this way, there will be the fostering of a constant encouragement given to the one set of instincts, and the struggling of a constant opposition made against the other. Now, only conceive this great bond of allegiance to be dissolved; the mighty and subordinating principle,

which wont to wield an ascendency over every movement and every affection, to be loosened and done away; and then would this loyal, obedient world become what ours is—independent of Christianity. Every constitutional desire would run out, in the unchecked spontaneity of its own movements. The law of heaven would furnish no counteraction to the impulses and the tendencies of nature. And tell us, in these circumstances, when the restraint of religion was thus lifted off, and all the passions let out to take their own tumultuous and independent career—tell us, if, though amid the uproar of the licentious and vindictive propensities, there did gleam forth at times some of the finer and the lovelier sympathies of nature—tell us, if this would at all affect the state of that world as a state of enmity against God; where his will was reduced to an element of utter insignificancy; where the voice of their rightful master fell powerless on the consciences of a listless and alienated family; where humour, and interest, and propensity—at one time selfish, and at another social—took their alternate sway over those hearts from which there was excluded all effectual sense of an over-

ruling God? If he be unheeded and disowned by the creatures whom he has formed, can it be said to alleviate the deformity of their rebellion, that they, at times, experience the impulse of some amiable feeling which he hath implanted, or at times hold out some beauteousness of aspect which he hath shed over them? Shall the value or the multitude of the gifts release them from their loyalty to the giver; and when nature puts herself into the attitude of indifference or hostility against him, how is it that the graces and the accomplishments of nature can be pled in mitigation of her antipathy to him, who invested nature with all her graces, and upholds her in the display of all her accomplishments?

The way, then, to assert the depravity of man, is to fasten on the radical element of depravity, and to show how deeply it lies incorporated with his moral constitution. It is not by an utterance of rash and sweeping totality to refuse him the possession of what is kind in sympathy, or of what is dignified in principle—for this were in the face of all observation. It is to charge him direct with his utter disloyalty to God. It is to

convict him of treason against the majesty of heaven. It is to press home upon him the impiety of not caring about God. It is to tell him, that the hourly and habitual language of his heart is, I will not have the Being who made me to rule over me. It is to go to the man of honour, and, while we frankly award it to him that his pulse beats high in the pride of integrity—it is to tell him, that he who keeps it in living play, and who sustains the loftiness of its movements, and who, in one moment of time, could arrest it for ever, is not in all his thoughts. It is to go to the man of soft and gentle emotions, and, while we gaze in tenderness upon him, it is to read to him, out of his own character, how the exquisite mechanism of feeling may be in full operation, while he who framed it is forgotten; while he who poured into his constitution the milk of human kindness, may never be adverted to with one single sentiment of veneration, or one single purpose of obedience; while he who gave him his gentler nature, who clothed him in all its adornments, and in virtue of whose appointment it is, that, instead of an odious and a revolting monster, he is the much loved child of sensibility,

may be utterly disowned by him. In a word, it is to go round among all that Humanity has to offer in the shape of fair, and amiable, and engaging, and to prove how deeply Humanity has revolted against that Being who has done so much to beautify and exalt her. It is to prove that the carnal mind, under all its varied complexions of harshness or of delicacy, is enmity against God. It is to prove that, let nature be as rich as she may in moral accomplishments, and let the most favoured of her sons realize upon his own person the finest and the fullest assemblage of them—should he, at the moment of leaving this theatre of display, and bursting loose from the framework of mortality, stand in the presence of his Judge, and have the question put to him, What hast thou done unto me? this man of constitutional virtue, with all the salutations he got upon earth, and all the reverence that he has left behind him, may, naked and defenceless, before him who sitteth on the throne, be left without a plea and without an argument.

God's controversy with our species is not, that the glow of honour or of humanity is never felt

among them. It is, that none of them understandeth, and none of them seeketh after God. It is, that he is deposed from his rightful ascendency. It is, that he, who in fact inserted in the human bosom every one principle that can embellish the individual possessor, or maintain the order of society, is banished altogether from the circle of his habitual contemplations. It is, that man taketh his way in life as much at random, as if there was no presiding Divinity at all; and that, whether he at one time grovel in the depths of sensuality, or at another kindle with some generous movement of sympathy or of patriotism, he is at both times alike unmindful of him to whom he owes his continuance and his birth. It is, that he moves his every footstep at his own will; and has utterly discarded, from its supremacy over him, the will of that invisible Master who compasses all his goings, and never ceases to pursue him by the claims of a resistless and legitimate authority. It is this which is the essential or the constituting principle of rebellion against God. This it is which has exiled the planet we live in beyond the limits of his favoured creation—and whether it be shrouded in the tur-

pitude of licentiousness or cruelty, or occasionally brightened with the gleam of the kindly and the honourable virtues, it is thus that it is seen as afar off, by him who sitteth on the throne, and looketh on our strayed world, as athwart a wide and a dreary gulf of separation.

And when prompted by love towards his alienated children, he devised a way of recalling them —when willing to pass over all the ingratitude he had gotten from their hands, he reared a pathway of return, and proclaimed a pardon and a welcome to all who should walk upon it—when through the offered Mediator, who magnified his broken law, and upheld, by his mysterious sacrifice, the dignity of that government which the children of Adam had disowned, he invited all to come to him and be saved—should this message be brought to the door of the most honourable man upon earth, and he turn in contempt and hostility away from it, has not that man posted himself more firmly than ever on the ground of rebellion? Though an unsullied integrity should rest upon all his transactions, and the homage of confidence and respect be awarded to him

from every quarter of society, has not this man, by slighting the overtures of reconciliation, just plunged himself the deeper in the guilt of a wilful and determined ungodliness? Has not the creature exalted itself above the Creator; and in the pride of those accomplishments, which never would have invested his person, had not they come to him from above, has he not, in the act of resisting the gospel, aggravated the provocation of his whole previous defiance to the Author of it?

Thus much for all that is amiable, and for all that is manly in the accomplishments of nature, when disjoined from the faith of Christianity. They take up a separate residence in the human character from the principle of godliness. Anterior to this religion, they go not to alleviate the guilt of our departure from the living God; and subsequently to this religion, they may blazon the character of him who stands out against it: but, on the principles of a most clear and intelligent equity, they never can shield him from the condemnation, and the curse of those who have neglected the great salvation.

The doctrine of the New Testament will bear to be confronted with all that can be met or noticed on the face of human society. And we speak most confidently to the experience of many who now hear us, when we say, that often, in the course of their manifold transactions, have they met the man, whom the bribery of no advantage whatever could seduce into the slightest deviation from the path of integrity—the man, who felt his nature within him put into a state of the most painful indignancy, at every thing that bore upon it the character of a sneaking or dishonourable artifice—the man, who positively could not be at rest under the consciousness that he had ever betrayed, even to his own heart, the remotest symptom of such an inclination—and whom, therefore, the unaided law of justice and of truth has placed on a high and deserved eminence in the walks of honourable merchandise.

Let us not withhold from this character the tribute of its most rightful admiration; but let us further ask, if, with all that he thus possessed of native feeling and constitutional integrity, you have never observed in any such individual an

utter emptiness of religion; and that God is not in all his thoughts; and that, when he does what happens to be at one with the will of the Lawgiver, it is not because he is impelled to it by a sense of its being the will of the Lawgiver, but because he is impelled to it by the working of his own instinctive sensibilities; and that, however fortunate, or however estimable these sensibilities are, they still consist with the habit of a mind that is in a state of total indifference about God? Have you never read, in your own character, or in the observed character of others, that the claims of the Divinity may be entirely forgotten by the very man to whom society around him yield, and rightly yield, the homage of an unsullied and honourable reputation; that this man may have all his foundations in the world; that every security on which he rests, and every enjoyment upon which his heart is set, lieth on this side of death; that a sense of the coming day, on which God is to enter into judgment with him, is, to every purpose of practical ascendency, as good as expunged altogether from his bosom; that he is far in desire, and far in enjoyment, and far in habitual contemplation, away from that

God who is not far from any one of us; that his extending credit, and his brightening prosperity, and his magnificent retreat from business, with all the splendour of its accommodations—that these are the futurities at which he terminates; and that he goes not in thought beyond them to that eternity, which, in the flight of a few little years, will absorb all, and annihilate all? In a word, have you never observed the man, who, with all that was right in mercantile principle, and all that was open and unimpeachable in the habit of his mercantile transactions, lived in a state of utter estrangement from the concerns of immortality? who, in reference to God, persisted, from one year to another, in the spirit of a deep slumber? who, in reference to the man that tries to awaken him out of his lethargy, recoils, with the most sensitive dislike, from the faithfulness of his ministrations? who, in reference to the Book which tells him of his nakedness and his guilt, never consults it with one practical aim, and never tries to penetrate beyond that aspect of mysteriousness which it holds out to an undiscerning world? who attends not church, or attends it with all the lifelessness of a form? who

reads not his Bible, or reads it in the discharge of a self-prescribed and unfruitful task? who prays not, or prays with the mockery of an unmeaning observation? and, in one word, who, while surrounded by all those testimonies which give to man a place of moral distinction among his fellows, is living in utter carelessness about God, and about all the avenues which lead to him.

Now, attend for a moment to what that is which the man has, and to what that is which he has not. He has an attribute of character which is in itself pure, and lovely, and honourable, and of good report. He has a natural principle of integrity; and under its impulse he may be carried forward to such fine exhibitions of himself, as are worthy of all admiration. It is very noble, when the simple utterance of his word carries as much security along with it, as if he had accompanied that utterance by the signatures, and the securities, and the legal obligations, which are required of other men. It might tempt one to be proud of his species, when he looks at the faith that is put in him by a distant correspond-

ent, who, without one other hold of him than his honour, consigns to him the wealth of a whole flotilla, and sleeps in the confidence that it is safe. It is, indeed, an animating thought, amid the gloom of this world's depravity, when we behold the credit which one man puts in another, though separated by oceans and by continents; when he fixes the anchor of a sure and steady dependence on the reported honesty of one whom he never saw; when, with all his fears for the treachery of the varied elements, through which his property has to pass, he knows, that should it only arrive at the door of its destined agent, all his fears and all his suspicions may be at an end. We know nothing finer than such an act of homage from one human being to another, when perhaps the diameter of the globe is between them; nor do we think that either the renown of her victories, or the wisdom of her councils, so signalizes the country in which we live, as does the honourable dealing of her merchants; that all the glories of British policy, and British valour, are far eclipsed by the moral splendour which British faith has thrown over the name and the character of our nation; nor has she

gathered so proud a distinction from all the tributaries of her power, as she has done from the awarded confidence of those men of all tribes, and colours, and languages, who look to our agency for the most faithful of all management, and to our keeping for the most unviolable of all custody.

There is no denying, then, the very extended prevalence of a principle of integrity in the commercial world; and he who has such a principle within him, has that to which all the epithets of our text may rightly be appropriated. But it is just as impossible to deny, that, with this thing which he has, there may be another thing which he has not. He may not have one duteous feeling of reverence which points upward to God. He may not have one wish, or one anticipation, which points forward to eternity. He may not have any sense of dependence on the Being who sustains him; and who gave him his very principle of honour, as part of that interior furniture which he has put into his bosom; and who surrounded him with the theatre on which he has come forward with the finest and most illustrious

displays of it; and who set the whole machinery of his sentiment and action a-going; and can, by a single word of his power, bid it cease from the variety, and cease from the gracefulness, of its movements. In other words, he is a man of integrity, and yet he is a man of ungodliness. He is a man born for the confidence and the admiration of his fellows, and yet a man whom his Maker can charge with utter defection from all the principles of a spiritual obedience. He is a man whose virtues have blazoned his own character in time, and have upheld the interests of society, and yet a man who has not, by one movement of principle, brought himself nearer to the kingdom of heaven, than the most profligate of the species. The condemnation, that he is an alien from God, rests upon him in all the weight of its unmitigated severity. The threat, that they who forget God shall be turned into hell, will, on the great day of its fell and sweeping operation, involve him among the wretched outcasts of eternity. That God from whom, while in the world, he withheld every due offering of gratitude, and remembrance, and universal subordination of habit and of desire, will show

him to his face, how, under the delusive garb of such sympathies as drew upon him the love of his acquaintances, and of such integrities as drew upon him their respect and their confidence, he was in fact a determined rebel against the authority of heaven; that not one commandment of the law, in the true extent of its interpretation, was ever fulfilled by him; that the pervading principle of obedience to this law, which is love to God, never had its ascendency over him; that the beseeching voice of the Lawgiver, so offended and so insulted—but who, nevertheless, devised in love a way of reconciliation for the guilty, never had the effect of recalling him; that, in fact, he neither had a wish for the friendship of God, nor cherished the hope of enjoying him—and that, therefore, as he lived without hope, so he lived without God in the world; finding all his desire, and all his sufficiency, to be somewhere else, than in that favour which is better than life; and so, in addition to the curse of having continued not in all the words of the book of God's law to do them, entailing upon himself the mighty aggravation of having neglected all the offers of his gospel.

We say, then, of this natural virtue, what our Saviour said of the virtue of the Pharisees, many of whom were not extortioners, as other men—that, verily, it hath its reward. When disjoined from a sense of God, it is of no religious estimation whatever; nor will it lead to any religious blessing, either in time or in eternity. It has, however, its enjoyments annexed to it, just as a fine taste has its enjoyments annexed to it; and in these is it abundantly rewarded. It is exempted from that painfulness of inward feeling which nature has annexed to every act of departure from honesty. It is sustained by a conscious sense of rectitude and elevation. It is gratified by the homage of society; the members of which are ever ready to award the tribute of acknowledgment to those virtues that support the interests of society. And, finally, it may be said, that prosperity, with some occasional variations, is the general accompaniment of that credit, which every man of undeviating justice is sure to draw around him. But what reward, will you tell us, is due to him on the great day of the manifestation of God's righteousness, when, in fact, he has done nothing unto God? What

recompense can be awarded to him out of those books which are then to be opened, and in which he stands recorded as a man overcharged with the guilt of spiritual idolatry? How shall God grant unto him the reward of a servant, when the service of God was not the principle of his doings in the world; and when neither the justice he rendered to others, nor the sensibility that he felt for them, bore the slightest character of an offering to his Maker?

But wherever the religious principle has taken possession of the mind, it animates these virtues with a new spirit; and when so animated, all such things as are pure, and lovely, and just, and true, and honest, and of good report, have a religious importance and character belonging to them. The text forms part of an epistle addressed to all the saints in Christ Jesus, which were at Philippi; and the lesson of the text is matter of direct and authoritative enforcement, on all who are saints in Christ Jesus, at the present day. Christianity, with the weight of its positive sanctions on the side of what is amiable and honourable in human virtue, causes such an

influence to rest on the character of its genuine disciples, that, on the ground both of inflexible justice and ever-breathing charity, they are ever sure to leave the vast majority of the world behind them. Simplicity and godly sincerity form essential ingredients of that peculiarity by which they stand signalized in the midst of an ungodly generation. The true friends of the gospel, tremblingly alive to the honour of their Master's cause, blush for the disgrace that has been brought on it by men who keep its Sabbaths, and yield an ostentatious homage to its doctrines and its sacraments. They utterly disclaim all fellowship with that vile association of cant and of duplicity, which has sometimes been exemplified, to the triumph of the enemies of religion; and they both feel the solemn truth, and act on the authority of the saying, that neither thieves, nor liars, nor extortioners, nor unrighteous persons, have any part in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

DISCOURSE II.

THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY IN AIDING AND AUGMENTING THE MERCANTILE VIRTUES.

"For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men."—Rom. xiv. 18.

We have already asserted the natural existence of such principles in the heart of man, as lead him to many graceful and to many honourable exhibitions of character. We have further asserted, that this formed no deduction whatever from that article of orthodoxy which affirms the utter depravity of our nature; that the essence of this depravity lies in man having broken loose from the authority of God, and delivered himself wholly up to the guidance of his own inclinations; that though some of these inclinations are in themselves amiable features of human charac-

ter, and point in their effects to what is most useful to human society, yet devoid as they all are of any reference to the will and to the rightful sovereignty of the Supreme Being, they could not avert, or even so much as alleviate, that charge of ungodliness, which may be fully carried round amongst all the sons and daughters of the species; that they furnish not the materials of any valid or satisfactory answer to the question, "What hast thou done unto God?" and that whether they are the desires of a native rectitude, or the desires of an instinctive benevolence, they go not to purge away the guilt of having no love, and no care, for the Being who formed and who sustains us.

But what is more. If the virtues and accomplishments of nature are at all to be admitted into the controversy between God and man, instead of forming any abatement upon the enormity of our guilt, they stamp upon it the reproach of a still deeper and more determined ingratitude. Let us conceive it possible, for a moment, that the beautiful personifications of Scripture were all realized; that the trees of the

forest clapped their hands unto God, and that the isles were glad at his presence; that the little hills shouted on every side, and the valleys covered over with corn sent forth their notes of rejoicing; that the sun and the moon praised him, and the stars of light joined in the solemn adoration; that the voice of glory to God was heard from every mountain and from every waterfall, and that all nature, animated throughout by the consciousness of a pervading and a presiding Deity, burst into one loud and universal song of gratulation. Would not a strain of greater loftiness be heard to ascend from those regions where the all-working God had left the traces of his own immensity, than from the tamer and the humbler scenery of an ordinary landscape? Would not you look for a gladder acclamation from the fertile field, than from the arid waste, where no character of grandeur made up for the barrenness that was around you? Would not the goodly tree, compassed about with the glories of its summer foliage, lift up an anthem of louder gratitude, than the lowly shrub that grew beneath it? Would not the flower, from whose leaves every hue of loveliness was reflected, send forth

a sweeter rapture than the russet weed, which never drew the eye of any admiring passenger? And, in a word, wherever you saw the towering eminences of nature, or the garniture of her more rich and beauteous adornments, would it not be there that you looked for the deepest tones of devotion, or there for the tenderest and most exquisite of its melodies?

There is both the sublime of character, and the beauteous of character, exemplified upon man. We have the one in that high sense of honour, which no interest and no terror can seduce from any of its obligations. We have the other in that kindliness of feeling, which one look or one sigh of imploring distress can touch into liveliest sympathy. Only grant, that we have nothing either in the constitution of our spirits, or in the structure of our bodies, which we did not receive; and that mind, with all its varieties, is as much the product of a creating hand, as matter in all its modifications; and then, on the face of human society, do we witness all the gradations of a moral scenery, which may be directly referred to the operation

of him who worketh all in all. It is our belief, that, as to any effectual sense of God, there is as deep a slumber throughout the whole of this world's living and rational generations, as there is throughout all the diversities of its mute and unconscious materialism; and that to make our alienated spirits again alive unto the Father of them, calls for as distinct and as miraculous an exertion of the Divinity, as would need to be put forth in the act of turning stones into the children of Abraham. Conceive this to be done then—and that a quickening and a realizing sense of the Deity pervaded all the men of our species—and that each knew how to refer his own endowments, with an adequate expression of gratitude to the unseen author of them—from whom, we ask, of all these various individuals, would you look for the halleluiahs of devoutest ecstasy? Would it not be from him whom God had arrayed in the splendour of nature's brightest accomplishments? Would it not be from him, with whose constitutional feelings the movements of honour and benevolence were in fullest harmony? Would it not be from him whom his maker had cast into the happiest mould, and

attempered into sweetest unison with all that was kind, and generous, and lovely, and ennobled by the loftiest emotions, and raised above his fellows into the finest spectacle of all that was graceful, and all that was manly? Surely, if the possession of these moralities be just another theme of acknowledgment to the Lord of the spirits of all flesh, then, if the acknowledgment be withheld, and these moralities have taken up their residence in the bosom of him who is utterly devoid of piety, they go to aggravate the reproach of his ingratitude; and to prove, that, of all the men upon earth who are far from God, he stands at the widest distance, he remains proof against the weightiest claims, and he, of the dead in trespasses and sins, is the most profoundly asleep to the call of religion, and to the supremacy of its righteous obligations.

It is by argument such as this, that we would attempt to convince of sin those who have a righteousness that is without godliness; and to prove, that, with the possession of such things as are pure, and lovely, and honest, and of good report, they in fact can only be admitted to re-

conciliation with God, on the same footing with the most worthless and profligate of the species; and to demonstrate, that they are in the very same state of need and of nakedness, and are therefore children of wrath, even as others; that it is only through faith in the preaching of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ that they can be saved; and that, unless brought down from the delusive eminency of their own conscious attainments, they take their forgiveness through the blood of the Redeemer, and their sanctification through the spirit which is at his giving, they shall obtain no part in that inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and which fadeth not away.

But the gospel of Jesus Christ does something more than hold out a refuge to the guilty. It takes all those who accept of its overtures under its supreme and exclusive direction. It keeps by them in the way of counsel, and exhortation, and constant superintendence. The grace which it reveals, is a grace which not merely saves all men, but which teaches all men. He who is the proposed Saviour, also claims to be the alone

master of those who put their trust in him. His cognizance extends itself over the whole line of their history; and there is not an affection of their heart, or a deed of their visible conduct, over which he does not assert the right of an authority that is above all control, and that refuses all rivalship.

Now, we want to point your attention to a distinction which obtains between one set and another set of his requirements. By the former, we are enjoined to practise certain virtues, which, separately from his injunction altogether, are in great demand, and in great reverence, amongst the members of society—such as compassion, and generosity, and justice, and truth; which, independently of the religious sanction they obtain from the law of the Saviour, are in themselves so lovely, and so honourable, and of such good report, that they are ever sure to carry general applause along with them, and thus to combine both the characteristics of our text —that he who in these things serveth Christ, is both acceptable to God, and approved of men.

But there is another set of requirements, where the will of God, instead of being seconded by the applause of men, is utterly at variance with it. There are some who can admire the generous sacrifices that are made to truth or to friendship, but who, without one opposing scruple, abandon themselves to all the excesses of riot and festivity, and are therefore the last to admire the puritanic sobriety of him whom they cannot tempt to put his chastity or his temperance away from him; though the same God, who bids us lie not one to another, also bids us keep the body under subjection, and to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. Again, there are some in whose eyes an unvitiated delicacy looks a beauteous and an interesting spectacle, and an undeviating self-control looks a manly and respectable accomplishment; but who have no taste in themselves, and no admiration in others, for the more direct exercises of religion; and who positively hate the strict and unbending preciseness of those who join in every ordinance, and on every returning night celebrate the praises of God in their family; and that, though the heavenly Lawgiver, who tells us to live righteously and soberly, tells us

also to live godly in the present evil world. And lastly, there are some who have not merely a toleration, but a liking for all the decencies of an established observation; but who, with the homage they pay to sabbaths and to sacraments, nauseate the Christian principle in the supreme and regenerating vitality of its influences; who, under a general religiousness of aspect, are still in fact the children of the world—and therefore hate the children of light in all that is peculiar and essentially characteristic of that high designation; who understand not what is meant by having our conversation in heaven; and utter strangers to the separated walk, and the spiritual exercises, and the humble devotedness, and the consecrated affections, of the new creature in Jesus Christ, shrink from them altogether as from the extravagancies of a fanaticism in which they have no share, and with which they can have no sympathy—and all this, though the same scripture which prescribes the exercises of household and of public religion, lays claim to an undivided authority over all the desires and affections of the soul; and will admit of no compromise between God and the world; and insists upon an utter

deadness to the one, and a most vehement sensibility to the other; and elevates the standard of loyalty to the Father of our Spirits, to the lofty pitch of loving him with all our strength, and of doing all things to his glory.

Let these examples serve to impress a real and experimental distinction which obtains between two sets of virtues; between those which possess the single ingredient of being approved by God, while they want the ingredient of being also acceptable unto men—and those which possess both these ingredients, and to the observance of which, therefore, we may be carried by a regard to the will of God, without any reference to the opinion of men—or by a regard to the opinion of men, without any reference to the will of God. Among the first class of virtues we would assign a foremost place to all those inward and spiritual graces which enter into the obedience of the affections—highly approved of God, but not at all acceptable to the general taste, or carrying along with them the general congeniality of the world. And then, though they do not possess the ingredient of God's approbation in a way so separate and unmixed,

we would say, that abstinence from profane language, and attendance upon church, and a strict keeping of the sabbath, and the exercises of family worship, and the more rigid degrees of sobriety, and a fearful avoidance of every encroachment on temperance or chastity, rank more appropriately with the first than with the second class of virtues; for though there be many in society who have no religion, and yet to whom several of these virtues are acceptable, yet you will allow, that they do not convey such a universal popularity along with them, as certain other virtues which belong indisputably to the second class. These are the virtues which have a more obvious and immediate bearing on the interest of society—such as the truth which is punctual to all its engagements, and the honour which never disappoints the confidence it has inspired, and the compassion which cannot look unmoved at any of the symptoms of human wretchedness, and the generosity which scatters unsparingly around it. These are virtues which God has enjoined, and in behalf of which man lifts the testimony of a loud and ready admiration—virtues in which there is a meeting and a combining of both the properties of our

text; so that he who in these things serveth Christ, is both approved of God, and acceptable unto men.

Let a steady hold be kept of this distinction, and it will be found capable of being turned to a very useful application, both to the object of illustrating principle, and to the important object of detecting character. For this purpose, let us carry the distinction along with us, and make it subservient to the establishment of two or three successive observations.

First. A man may possess, to a considerable extent, the second class of virtues, and not possess so much as one iota of the religious principle; and that, among other reasons, because a man may feel a value for one of the attributes which belongs to this class of virtues, and have no value whatever for the other attribute. If justice be both approved by God, and acceptable to men, he may, on the latter property alone, be induced to the strictest maintenance of this virtue—and that without suffering its former property to have any practical influence whatever on any of his

habits, or any of his determinations: and the same with every other virtue belonging to this second class. As residing in his character, there may not be the ingredient of godliness in any one of them. He may be well reported on account of them by men; but with God he may lie under as fearful a severity of reckoning, as if he wanted them altogether. Surely, it does not go to alleviate the withdrawment of your homage from God, that you have such an homage to the opinion of men, as influences you to do things, to the doing of which the law of God is not able to influence you. It cannot be said to palliate the revolting of your inclinations from the Creator, that you have transferred them all to the creature; and given an ascendency to the voice of human reputation, which you have refused to the voice and authority of your Lawgiver in heaven. Your want of subordination to him is surely not made up by the respectful subordination that you render to the taste or the judgment of society. And in addition to this, we would have you to remember, that though other constitutional principles, besides a regard to the opinion of others, helped to form the virtues of the second class upon your

character; though compassion, and generosity, and truth, would have broken out into full and flourishing display upon you, and that, just because you had a native sensibility, or a native love of rectitude; yet, if the first ingredient be wanting, if a regard to the approbation of God have no share in the production of the moral accomplishment—then all the morality you can pretend to, is of as little religious estimation, and is as utterly disconnected with the rewards of religion, as all the elegance of taste you can pretend to, or all the raptured love of music you can pretend to, or all the vigour and dexterity of bodily exercise you can pretend to. All these, in reference to the great question of immortality, profit but little; and it is godliness alone that is profitable unto all things. It is upon this consideration that we would have you to open your eyes to the nakedness of your condition in the sight of God; to look to the full weight of the charge that he may prefer against you; to estimate the fearful extent of the deficiency under which you labour; to resist the delusive whispering of peace, when there is no peace; and to understand, that the wrath of God abideth on

every child of nature, however rich he may be in the virtues and accomplishments of nature.

But again. This view of the distinction between the two sets of virtues, will serve to explain how it is, that, in the act of turning unto God, the one class of them appears to gather more copiously, and more conspicuously, upon the front of a renewed character, than the other class; how it is, that the former wear a more unequivocal aspect of religiousness than the latter; how it is, that an air of gravity, and decency, and seriousness, looks to be more in alliance with sanctity, than the air either of open integrity, or of smiling benevolence; how it is, that the most ostensible change in the habit of a converted profligate, is that change in virtue of which he withdraws himself from the companions of his licentiousness; and that to renounce the dissipations of his former life, stands far more frequently, or, at least, far more visibly, associated with the act of putting on Christianity, than to renounce the dishonesties of his former life. It is true, that, by the law of the gospel, he is laid as strictly under the authority of the command-

ment to live righteously, as of the commandment to live soberly. But there is a compound character in those virtues which are merely social; and the presence of the one ingredient serves to throw into the shade, or to disguise altogether, the presence of the other ingredient. There is a greater number of irreligious men, who are at the same time just in their dealings, than there is of irreligious men, who are at the same time pure and temperate in their habits; and therefore it is, that justice, even the most scrupulous, is not so specifical, and, of course, not so satisfying a mark of religion, as is a sobriety that is rigid and unviolable. And all this helps to explain how it is, that when a man comes under the power of religion, to abandon the levities of his past conduct is an event which stands far more noticeably out upon him, at this stage of his history, than to abandon the iniquities of his past conduct; that the most characteristic transformation which takes place at such a time, is a transformation from thoughtlessness, and from licentious gaiety, and from the festive indulgencies of those with whom he wont to run to all those excesses of riot, of which the Apostle says, that they which

do these things shall not inherit the kingdom of God: for even then, and in the very midst of all his impiety, he may have been kind-hearted, and there might be no room upon his person for a visible transformation from inhumanity of character; even then, he may have been honourable, and there might be as little room for a visible transformation from fraudulency of character.

Thirdly. Nothing is more obvious than the antipathy that is felt by a certain class of religionists against the preaching of good works; and the antipathy is assuredly well and warrantably grounded, when it is such a preaching as goes to reduce the importance, or to infringe upon the simplicity, of the great doctrine of justification by faith. But along with this, may there not be remarked the toleration with which they will listen to a discourse upon one set of good works, and the evident coldness and dislike with which they listen to a discourse on another set of them; how a pointed remonstrance against sabbath breaking sounds in their ears, as if more in character from the pulpit, than a pointed remonstrance against the commission of theft, or

the speaking of evil; how an eulogium on the observance of family worship feels, in their taste, to be more impregnated with the spirit of sacredness, than an eulogium on the virtues of the shop, or of the market-place, and that, while the one is approven of as having about it the solemn and the suitable characteristics of godliness, the other is stigmatized as a piece of barren, heartless, heathenish, and philosophic morality? Now, this antipathy to the preaching of the latter species of good works, has something peculiar in it. It is not enough to say, that it arises from a sensitive alarm about the stability of the doctrine of justification; for let it be observed, that this doctrine stands opposed to the merit not of one particular class of performances, but to the merit of all performances whatsoever. It is just as unscriptural a detraction from the great truth of salvation by faith, to rest our acceptance with God on the duties of prayer, or of rigid sabbath keeping, or of strict and untainted sobriety, as to rest it on the punctual fulfilment of all your bargains, and on the extent of your manifold liberalities. It is not, then, a mere zeal about the great article of justification which lies at

the bottom of that peculiar aversion that is felt towards a sermon on some social or humane accomplishment; and that is not felt towards a sermon on sober-mindedness, or a sermon on the observation of the sacrament, or a sermon on any of those performances which bear a more direct and exclusive reference to God. We shall find the explanation of this phenomenon, which often presents itself in the religious world, in that distinction of which we have just required that it should be kept in steady hold, and followed into its various applications. The aversion in question is often, in fact, a well-founded aversion, to a topic, which, though religious in the matter of it, may, from the way in which it is proposed, be altogether secular in the principle of it. It is resistance to what is deemed, and justly deemed, an act of usurpation on the part of certain virtues, which, when unanimated by a sentiment of godliness, are entitled to no place whatever in the ministrations of the gospel of Christ. It proceeds from a most enlightened fear, least that should be held to make up the whole of religion, which is in fact utterly devoid of the spirit of religion; and from a true and tender apprehen-

sion, lest, on the possession of certain accomplishments, which secure a fleeting credit throughout the little hour of this world's history, deluded man should look forward to his eternity with hope, and upward to his God with complacency —while he carries not on his forehead one vestige of the character of heaven, one lineament of the aspect of godliness.

And lastly. The first class of virtues bear the character of religiousness more *strongly*, just because they bear that character more *singly*. The people who are without, might, no doubt, see in every real Christian the virtues of the second class also; but these virtues do not belong to them peculiarly and exclusively. For though it be true, that every religious man must be honest, the converse does not follow, that every honest man must be religious. And it is because the social accomplishments do not form the specific, that neither do they form the most prominent and distinguishing marks of Christianity. They may also be recognized as features in the character of men, who utterly repudiate the whole style and doctrine of the New Testa-

ment; and hence a very prevalent impression in society, that the faith of the gospel does not bear so powerfully and so directly on the relative virtues of human conduct. A few instances of hypocrisy amongst the more serious professors of our faith, serve to rivet the impression, and to give it perpetuity in the world. One single example, indeed, of sanctimonious duplicity, will suffice, in the judgment of many, to cover the whole of vital and orthodox Christianity with disgrace. The report of it will be borne in triumph amongst the companies of the irreligious. The man who pays no homage to sabbaths or to sacraments, will be contrasted in the open, liberal, and manly style, of all his transactions, with the low cunning of this drivelling methodistical pretender; and the loud laugh of a multitude of scorners, will give a force and a swell to this public outcry against the whole character of the sainthood.

Now, this delusion on the part of the unbelieving world is very natural, and ought not to excite our astonishment. We are not surprised, from the reasons already adverted to, that the

truth, and the justice, and the humanity, and the moral loveliness, which do in fact belong to every new creature in Jesus Christ our Lord, should miss their observation; or, at least, fail to be recognized among the other more obvious characteristics into which believers have been translated by the faith of the gospel. But, on this very subject, there is a tendency to delusion on the part of the disciples of the faith. They need to be reminded of the solemn and indispensable religiousness of the second class of virtues. They need to be told, that though these virtues do possess the one ingredient of being approved by men, and may, on this single account, be found to reside in the characters of those who live without God—yet, that they also possess the other ingredient of being acceptable unto God; and, on this latter account, should be made the subjects of their most strenuous cultivation. They must not lose sight of the one ingredient in the other; or stigmatize, as so many fruitless and insignificant moralities, those virtues which enter as component parts into the service of Christ; so that he who in these things serveth Christ, is both acceptable to God, and approved

by men. They must not expend all their warmth on the high and peculiar doctrine of the New Testament, while they offer a cold and reluctant admission to the practical duties of the New Testament. The Apostle has bound the one to the other by a tie of immediate connexion. Wherefore, lie not one to another, as ye have put off the old man and his deeds, and put on the new man, which is formed after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness. Here the very obvious and popular accomplishment of truth is grafted on the very peculiar doctrine of regeneration: and you altogether mistake the kind of transforming influence which the faith of the gospel brings along with it, if you think that uprightness of character does not emerge at the same time with godliness of character; or that the virtues of society do not form upon the believer into as rich and varied an assemblage, as do the virtues of the sanctuary; or that, while he puts on those graces which are singly acceptable to God, he falls behind in any of those graces which are both acceptable to God, and approved of men.

Let, therefore, every pretender to Christianity vindicate this assertion by his own personal history in the world. Let him not lay his godliness aside, when he is done with the morning devotion of his family; but carry it abroad with him, and make it his companion and his guide through the whole business of the day; always bearing in his heart the sentiment, that thou God seest me; and remembering, that there is not one hour that can flow, or one occasion that can cast up, where his law is not present with some imperious exaction or other. It is false, that the principle of Christian sanctification possesses no influence over the familiarities of civil and ordinary life. It is altogether false, that godliness is a virtue of such a lofty and monastic order, as to hold its dominion only over the solemnities of worship, or over the solitudes of prayer and spiritual contemplation. If it be substantially a grace within us at all, it will give a direction and a colour to the whole of our path in society. There is not one conceivable transaction, amongst all the manifold varieties of human employment, which it is not fitted to animate by its spirit. There is nothing that meets us too homely, to be beyond

the reach of obtaining, from its influence, the stamp of something celestial. It offers to take the whole man under its ascendency, and to subordinate all his movements: nor does it hold the place which rightfully belongs to it, till it be vested with a presiding authority over the entire system of human affairs. And therefore it is, that the preacher is not bringing down Christianity—he is only sending it abroad over the field of its legitimate operation, when he goes with it to your counting-houses, and there rebukes every selfish inclination that would carry you ever so little within the limits of fraudulency; when he enters into your chambers of agency, and there detects the character of falsehood, which lurks under all the plausibility of your multiplied and excessive charges; when he repairs to the crowded market-place, and pronounces of every bargain, over which truth, in all the strictness of quakerism, has not presided, that it is tainted with moral evil; when he looks into your shops, and, in listening to the contest of argument between him who magnifies his article, and him who pretends to undervalue it, he calls it the contest of avarice, broken loose from the re-

straints of integrity. He is not, by all this, vulgarizing religion, or giving it the hue and the character of earthliness. He is only asserting the might and the universality of its sole pre-eminence over man. And therefore it is, that if possible to solemnize his hearers to the practice of simplicity and godly sincerity in their dealings, he would try to make the odiousness of sin stand visibly out on every shade and modification of dishonesty; and to assure them, that if there be a place in our world, where the subtle evasion, and the dexterous imposition, and the sly but gainful concealment, and the report which misleads an inquirer, and the gloss which tempts the unwary purchaser—are not only currently practised in the walks of merchandise, but, when not carried forward to the glare and the literality of falsehood, are beheld with general connivance; if there be a place where the sense of morality has thus fallen, and all the nicer delicacies of conscience are overborne in the keen and ambitious rivalry of men hasting to be rich, and wholly given over to the idolatrous service of the God of this world—then that is the place, the smoke of whose iniquity rises before Him who sitteth

on the throne, in a tide of deepest and most revolting abomination.

And here we have to complain of the public injustice that is done to Christianity, when one of its ostentatious professors has acted the hypocrite, and stands in disgraceful exposure before the eyes of the world. We advert to the readiness with which this is turned into a matter of general impeachment, against every appearance of seriousness; and how loud the exclamation is against the religion of all who signalize themselves; and that, if the aspect of godliness be so very decided as to become an aspect of peculiarity, then is this peculiarity converted into a ground of distrust and suspicion against the bearer of it. Now, it so happens, that, in the midst of this world lying in wickedness, a man, to be a Christian at all, must signalize himself. Neither is he in a way of salvation, unless he be one of a very peculiar people; nor would we precipitately consign him to discredit, even though the peculiarity be so very glaring as to provoke the charge of methodism. But, instead of making one man's hypocrisy act as a drawback

upon the reputation of a thousand, we submit, if it would not be a fairer and more philosophical procedure, just to betake one's-self to the method of induction—to make a walking survey over the town, and record an inventory of all the men in it who are so very far gone as to have the voice of psalms in their family; or as to attend the meetings of fellowship for prayer; or as scrupulously to abstain from all that is questionable in the amusements of the world; or as, by any other marked and visible symptom whatever, to stand out to general observation as the members of a saintly and separated society. We know, that even of such there are a few, who, if Paul were alive, would move him to weep for the reproach they bring upon his master. But we also know, that the blind and impetuous world exaggerates the few into the many; inverts the process of atonement altogether, by laying the sins of one man upon the multitude; looks at their general aspect of sanctity, and is so engrossed with this single expression of character, as to be insensible to the noble uprightness, and the tender humanity, with which this sanctity is associated. And therefore it is, that we offer the

assertion, and challenge all to its most thorough and searching investigation, that the Christianity of these people, which many think does nothing but cant, and profess, and run after ordinances, has augmented their honesties and their liberalities, and that, tenfold beyond the average character of society; that these are the men we oftenest meet with in the mansions of poverty—and who look with the most wakeful eye over all the sufferings and necessities of our species—and who open their hand most widely in behalf of the imploring and the friendless—and to whom, in spite of all their mockery, the men of the world are sure, in the negociations of business, to award the readiest confidence—and who sustain the most splendid part in all those great movements of philanthrophy which bear on the general interests of mankind—and who, with their eye full upon eternity, scatter the most abundant blessings over the fleeting pilgrimage of time—and who, while they hold their conversation in heaven, do most enrich the earth we tread upon, with all those virtues which secure enjoyment to families, and uphold the order and prosperity of the commonwealth.

DISCOURSE III.

THE POWER OF SELFISHNESS IN PROMOTING THE HONESTIES OF MERCANTILE INTERCOURSE.

"And if you do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same."—LUKE vi. 33.

IT is to be remarked of many of those duties, the performance of which confers the least distinction upon an individual, that they are at the same time the very duties, the violation of which would confer upon him the largest measure of obloquy and disgrace. Truth and justice do not serve to elevate a man so highly above the average morality of his species, as would generosity, or ardent friendship, or devoted and disinterested patriotism. The former are greatly more common than the latter; and, on that account, the presence of them is not so calculated to signalize the individual to whom they belong. But that

is one account, also, why the absence of them would make him a more monstrous exception to the general run of character in society. And, accordingly, while it is true, that there are more men of integrity in the world, than there are men of very wide and liberal beneficence—it is also true, that one act of falsehood, or one act of dishonesty, would stamp a far more burning infamy on the name of a transgressor, than any defect in those more heroic charities, and extraordinary virtues, of which humanity is capable.

So it is far more disgraceful not to be just to another, than not to be kind to him; and, at the same time, an act of kindness may be held in higher positive estimation than an act of justice. The one is my right—nor is there any call for the homage of a particular testimony when it is rendered. The other is additional to my right—the offering of a spontaneous good will, which I had no title to exact; and which, therefore, when rendered to me, excites in my bosom the cordiality of a warmer acknowledgment. And yet, our Saviour, who knew what was in man, saw, that much of the apparent kindness of na-

ture, was resolvable into the real selfishness of nature; that much of the good done unto others, was done in the hope that these others would do something again. And, we believe, it would be found by an able analyst of the human character, that this was the secret but substantial principle of many of the civilities and hospitalities of ordinary intercourse—that if there were no expectation either of a return in kind, or of a return in gratitude, or of a return in popularity, many of the sweetening and cementing virtues of a neighbourhood would be practically done away—all serving to prove, that a multitude of virtues, which, in effect, promoted the comfort and the interest of others, were tainted in principle by a latent regard to one's own interest; and that thus being the fellowship of those who did good, either as a return for the good done unto them, or who did good in hope of such a return, it might be, in fact, what our Saviour characterizes it in the text—the fellowship of sinners.

But if to do that which is unjust, is still more disgraceful than not to do that which is kind, it would prove more strikingly than before, how

deeply sin had tainted the moral constitution of our species—could it be shown, that the great practical restraint on the prevalence of this more disgraceful thing in society, is the tie of that common selfishness which actuates and characterizes all its members. It were a curious but important question, were it capable of being resolved—if men did not feel it their interest to be honest, how much of the actual doings of honesty would still be kept up in the world? It is our own opinion of the nature of man, that it has its honourable feelings, and its instinctive principles of rectitude, and its constitutional love of truth and of integrity; and that, on the basis of these, a certain portion of uprightness would remain amongst us, without the aid of any prudence, or any calculation whatever. All this we have fully conceded; and have already attempted to demonstrate, that, in spite of it, the character of man is thoroughly pervaded by the very essence of sinfulness; because, with all the native virtues which adorn it, there adheres to it that foulest of all spiritual deformities—unconcern about God, and even antipathy to God. It has been argued against the orthodox doctrine of

the universality of human corruption, that even without the sphere of the operation of the gospel, there do occur so many engaging specimens of worth and benevolence in society. The reply is, that this may be no deduction from the doctrine whatever, but be even an aggravation of it—should the very men who exemplify so much of what is amiable, carry in their hearts an indifference to the will of that Being who thus hath formed, and thus hath embellished them. But it would be a heavy deduction indeed, not from the doctrine, but from its hostile and opposing argument, could it be shown, that the vast majority of all equitable dealing amongst men, is performed, not on the principle of honour at all, but on the principle of selfishness—that this is the soil upon which the honesty of the world mainly flourishes, and is sustained; that, were the connexion dissolved between justice to others and our own particular advantage, this would go very far to banish the observation of justice from the earth; that, generally speaking, men are honest, not because they are lovers of God, and not even because they are lovers of virtue, but because they are lovers of their ownselves—in-

somuch, that if it were possible to disjoin the good of self altogether from the habit of doing what was fair, as well as from the habit of doing what was kind to the people around us, this would not merely isolate the children of men from each other, in respect of the obligations of beneficence, but it would arm them into an undisguised hostility against each other, in respect of their rights. The mere disinterested principle would set up a feeble barrier, indeed, against a desolating tide of selfishness, now set loose from the consideration of its own advantage. The genuine depravity of the human heart would burst forth and show itself in its true characters; and the world in which we live be transformed into a scene of unblushing fraud, of open and lawless depredation.

And, perhaps, after all, the best way of arriving practically at the solution of this question would be, not by a formal induction of particular cases, but by committing the matter to the gross and general experience of those who are most conversant in the affairs of business. There is a sort of undefineable impression you all have upon this

subject, on the justness of which, however, we are disposed to lay a very considerable stress—an impression gathered out of the mass of the recollections of a whole life—an impression founded on what you may have observed in the history of your own doings—a kind of tact that you have acquired as the fruit of your repeated intercourse with men, and of the manifold transactions that you have had with them, and of the number of times in which you have been personally implicated with the play of human passions, and human interests. It is our own conviction, that a well exercised merchant could cast a more intelligent glance at this question, than a well exercised metaphysician; and therefore do we submit its decision to those of you who have hazarded most largely, and most frequently, on the faith of agents, and customers, and distant correspondents. We know the fact of a very secure and well warranted confidence in the honesty of others, being widely prevalent amongst you; and that, were it not for this, all the interchanges of trade would be suspended; and that confidence is the very soul and life of commercial activity; and it is delightful to think, how thus

a man can suffer all the wealth which belongs to him to depart from under his eye, and to traverse the mightiest oceans and continents of our world, and to pass into the custody of men whom he never saw. And it is a sublime homage, one should think, to the honourable and high-minded principles of our nature, that, under their guardianship, the adverse hemispheres of the globe should be bound together in safe and profitable merchandise; and that thus one should sleep with a bosom undisturbed by jealousy, in Britain, who has all, and more than all his property treasured in the warehouses of India—and that, just because there he knows there is vigilance to defend it, and activity to dispose of it, and truth to account for it, and all those trusty virtues which ennoble the character of man to shield it from injury, and send it back again in an increasing tide of opulence to his door.

There is no question, then, as to the fact of a very extended practical honesty, between man and man, in their intercourse with each other. The only question is, as to the reason of the fact. Why is it, that he whom you have trusted acquits

himself of his trust with such correctness and fidelity? Whether is his mind, in so doing, most set upon your interest or upon his own? Whether is it because he seeks your advantage in it, or because he finds in it his own advantage? Tell us to which of the two concerns he is most tremblingly alive—to your property, or to his own character? and whether, upon the last of these feelings, he may not be more forcibly impelled to equitable dealing than upon the first of them? We well know, that there is room enough in his bosom for both; but to determine how powerfully selfishness is blended with the punctualities and the integrities of business, let us ask those who can speak most soundly and experimentally on the subject, what would be the result, if the element of selfishness were so detached from the operations of trade, that there was no such thing as a man suffering in his prosperity, because he suffered in his good name; that there was no such thing as a desertion of custom and employment coming upon the back of a blasted credit, and a tainted reputation; in a word, if the only security we had of man was his principles, and that his interest flourished and augmented just as

surely without his principles as with them? Tell us, if the hold we have of a man's own personal advantage were thus broken down, in how far the virtues of the mercantile world would survive it? Would not the world of trade sustain as violent a derangement on this mighty hold being cut asunder, as the world of nature would on the suspending of the law of gravitation? Would not the whole system, in fact, fall to pieces, and be dissolved? Would not men, when thus released from the magical chain of their own interest, which bound them together into a fair and seeming compact of principle, like dogs of rapine, let loose upon their prey, overleap the barrier which formerly restrained them? Does not this prove, that selfishness, after all, is the grand principle on which the brotherhood of the human race is made to hang together; and that he who can make the wrath of man to praise him, has also, upon the selfishness of man, caused a most beauteous order of wide and useful intercourse to be suspended?

But let us here stop to observe, that, while there is much in this contemplation to magnify

the wisdom of the Supreme Contriver, there is also much in it to humble man, and to convict him of the deceitfulness of that moral complacency with which he looks to his own character, and his own attainments. There is much in it to demonstrate, that his righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and that the idolatry of self, however hidden in its operation, may be detected in almost every one of them. God may combine the separate interests of every individual of the human race, and the strenuous prosecution of these interests by each of them, into a harmonious system of operation, for the good of one great and extended family. But if, on estimating the character of each individual member of that family, we shall find, that the main-spring of his actions is the urgency of a selfish inclination; and that to this his very virtues are subordinate; and that even the honesties which mark his conduct are chiefly, though, perhaps, insensibly due to the selfishness which actuates and occupies his whole heart;—then, let the semblance be what it may, still the reality of the case accords with the most mortifying representations of the New Testament. The moralities of nature are but

the moralities of a day, and will cease to be applauded when this world, the only theatre of their applause, is burnt up. They are but the blossoms of that rank efflorescence which is nourished on the soil of human corruption, and can never bring forth fruit unto immortality. The discerner of all secrets sees that they emanate from a principle which is at utter war with the charity that prepares for the enjoyments, and that glows in the bosoms of the celestial; and, therefore, though highly esteemed among men, they may be in his sight an abomination.

Let us, if possible, make this still clearer to your apprehension, by descending more minutely into particulars. There is not one member of the great mercantile family, with whom there does not obtain a reciprocal interest between himself and all those who compose the circle of his various correspondents. He does them good; but his eye is all the while open to the expectation of their doing him something again. They minister to him all the profits of his employment; but not unless he minister to them of his service, and attention, and fidelity. Inso-

much, that if his credit abandon him, his prosperity will also abandon him. If he forfeit the confidence of others, he will also forfeit their custom along with it. So that, in perfect consistency with interest being the reigning idol of his soul, he may still be, in every way, as sensitive of encroachment upon his reputation, as he would be of encroachment upon his property; and be as vigilant, to the full, in guarding his name against the breath of calumny, or suspicion, as in guarding his estate against the inroads of a depredator. Now, this tie of reciprocity, which binds him into fellowship and good faith with society at large, will sometimes, in the mere course of business, and its unlooked-for fluctuations, draw one or two individuals into a still more special intimacy with himself. There may be a lucrative partnership, in which it is the pressing necessity of each individual, that all of them, for a time at least, stick closely and steadily together. Or there may be a thriving interchange of commodities struck out, where it is the mutual interest of all who are concerned, that each take his assigned part and adhere to it. Or there may be a promising arrangement

devised, which it needs concert and understanding to effectuate; and, for which purpose, several may enter into a skilful and well ordered combination. We are neither saying that this is very general in the mercantile world, or that it is in the slightest degree unfair. But you must be sensible, that, amid the reelings and movements of the great trading society, the phenomenon sometimes offers itself of a groupe of individuals who have entered into some compact of mutual accommodation, and who, therefore, look as if they were isolated from the rest by the bond of some more strict and separate alliance. All we aim at, is to gather illustration to our principle, out of the way in which the members of this associated cluster conduct themselves to each other; how such a cordiality may pass between them, as, one could suppose, to be the cordiality of genuine friendship; how such an intercourse might be maintained among their families, as might look like the intercourse of unmingled affection; how such an exuberance of mutual hospitality might be poured forth, as to recal those poetic days when avarice was unknown, and men lived in harmony together on the fruits of one

common inheritance; and how nobly disdainful each member of the combination appeared to be of such little savings, as could be easily surrendered to the general good and adjustment of the whole concern. And all this, you will observe, so long as the concern prospered, and it was for the interest of each to abide by it; and the respective accounts current gladdened the heart of every individual, by the exhibition of an abundant share of the common benefit to himself. But then, every such system of operations comes to an end. And what we ask is, if it be at all an unlikely evolution of our nature, that the selfishness which lay in wrapt concealment, during the progress of these transactions, should now come forward and put out to view its cloven foot, when they draw to their termination? And as the tie of reciprocity gets looser, is it not a very possible thing, that the murmurs of something like unfair or unhandsome conduct should get louder? And that a fellowship, hitherto carried forward in smiles, should break up in reproaches? And that the whole character of this fellowship should show itself more unequivocally as it comes nearer to its close? And that

some of its members, as they are becoming disengaged from the bond of mutual interest, should also become disengaged from the bond of those mutual delicacies and proprieties, and even honesties, which had heretofore marked the whole of their intercourse?—Insomuch, that a matter in which all the parties looked so fair, and magnanimous, and liberal, might at length degenerate into a contest of keen appropriation, a scramble of downright and undisguised selfishness?

But though this may happen sometimes, we are far from saying that it will happen generally. It could not, in fact, without such an exposure of character, as might not merely bring a man down in the estimation of those from whom he is now withdrawing himself, but also in the estimation of that general public with whom he is still linked; and on whose opinion of him there still rests the dependance of a strong personal interest. To estimate precisely the whole influence of this consideration, or the degree in which honesty of character is resolvable into selfishness of character, it would be necessary to suppose,

that the tie of reciprocity was dissolved, not merely between the individual and those with whom he had been more particularly and more intimately associated—but that the tie of reciprocity was dissolved between the individual and the whole of his former acquaintanceship in business. Now, the situation which comes nearest to this, is that of a man on the eve of bankruptcy, and with no sure hope of so retrieving his circumstances as again to emerge into credit, and be restored to some employment of gain or of confidence. If he have either honourable or religious feelings, then character, as connected with principle, may still, in his eyes, be something; but character, as connected with prudence, or the calculations of interest, may now be nothing. In the dark hour of the desperation of his soul, he may feel, in fact, that he has nothing to lose: and let us now see how he will conduct himself, when thus released from that check of reputation which formerly held him. In these circumstances, if you have ever seen the man abandon himself to utter regardlessness of all the honesties which at one time adorned him, and doing such disgraceful things

as he would have spurned at the very suggestion of, in the days of his prosperity; and, forgetful of his former name, practising all possible shifts of duplicity to prolong the credit of a tottering establishment; and to keep himself afloat for a few months of torture and restlessness, weaving such a web of entanglement around his many friends and companions, as shall most surely implicate some of them in his fall; and, as the crisis approaches, plying his petty wiles how to survive the coming ruin, and to gather up of its fragments to his family. O! how much is there here to deplore; and who can be so ungenerous as to stalk in unrelenting triumph over the helplessness of so sad an overthrow! But if ever such an exhibition meet your eye, while we ask you not to withhold your pity from the unfortunate, we ask you also to read in it a lesson of worthless and sunken humanity; how even its very virtues are tinctured with corruption; and that the honour, and the truth, and the equity, with which man proudly thinks his nature to be embellished, are often reared on the basis of selfishness, and lie prostrate in the dust when that basis is cut away.

But other instances may be quoted, which go still more satisfactorily to prove the very extended influence of selfishness on the moral judgments of our species; and how readily the estimate, which a man forms on the question of right and wrong, accommodates itself to his own interest. There is a strong general reciprocity of advantage between the government of a country and all its inhabitants. The one party, in this relation, renders a revenue for the expenses of the state. The other party renders back again protection from injustice and violence. Were the means furnished by the former withheld, the benefit conferred by the latter would cease to be administered. So that, with the government, and the public at large, nothing can be more strict, and more indispensable, than the tie of reciprocity that is between them. But this is not felt, and therefore not acted upon, by the separate individuals who compose that public. The reciprocity does not come home with a sufficiently pointed and personal application to each of them. Every man may calculate, that though he, on the strength of some dexterous evasions, were to keep back of the tribute that is due by him,

the mischief that would recoil upon himself is divided with the rest of his countrymen; and the portion of it which comes to his door would be so very small, as to be altogether insensible. To all feeling he will just be as effectually sheltered, by the power and the justice of his country, whether he pay his taxes in full, or, under the guise of some skilful concealment, pay them but partially; and, therefore, to every practical effect, the tie of reciprocity, between him and his sovereign, is in a great measure dissolved. Now, what is the actual adjustment of the moral sense, and moral conduct, of the population, to this state of matters? It is quite palpable. Subterfuges which, in private business, would be held to be disgraceful, are not held to be so disgraceful in this department of a man's personal transactions. The cry of indignation, which would be lifted up against the falsehood or dishonesty of a man's dealings in his own neighbourhood, is mitigated or unheard, though, in his dealings with the state, there should be the very same relaxation of principle. On this subject, there is a connivance of popular feeling, which, if extended to the whole of human traffic, would

banish all its securities from the world. Giving reason to believe, that much of the good done among men, is done on the expectation of a good that will be rendered back again; and that many of the virtues, by which the fellowship of human beings is regulated and sustained, still leave the imputation unredeemed, of its being a fellowship of sinners; and that both the practice of morality, and the demand for it, are measured by the operation of a self-love, which, so far from signalizing any man, or preparing him for eternity, he holds in common with the fiercest and most degenerate of his species; and that, apart from the consideration of his own interest, simplicity and godly sincerity are, to a great degree, unknown; insomuch, that though God has interposed with a law, of giving unto all their dues, and tribute to whom tribute is due—we may venture an affirmation of the vast majority of this tribute, that it is rendered for wrath's sake, and not for conscience' sake. Of so little effect is unsupported and solitary conscience to stem the tide of selfishness. And it is chiefly when honesty and truth go overbearingly along with this tide, that the voice of man is lifted up

to acknowledge them, and his heart becomes feelingly alive to a sense of their obligations.

And let us here just ask, in what relation of criminality does he who uses a contraband article stand to him who deals in it? In precisely the same relation that a receiver of stolen goods stands to a thief or a depredator. There may be some who revolt at the idea of being so classified. But, if the habit we have just denounced can be fastened on men of rank and seemly reputation, let us just humble ourselves into the admission of how little the righteous practice of the world has the foundation of righteous principle to sustain it; how feeble are the securities of rectitude, had it nothing to uphold it but its own native charms, and native obligations; how society is held together, only because the grace of God can turn to account the worthless propensities of the individuals who compose it; and how, if the virtues of fidelity, and truth, and justice, had not the prop of selfishness to rest upon, they would, with the exception of a few scattered remnants, take their departure from the world, and leave

it a prey to the anarchy of human passions—to the wild misrule of all those depravities which agitate and deform our ruined nature.

The very same exhibition of our nature may be witnessed in almost every parish of our sister kingdom, where the people render a revenue to the minister of religion, and the minister renders back again a return, it is true—but not such a return, as, in the estimation of gross and ordinary selfishness, is at all deemed an equivalent for the sacrifice which has been made. In this instance, too, that law of reciprocity which reigns throughout the common transactions of merchandise, is altogether suspended; and the consequence is, that the law of right is trampled into ashes. A tide of public odium runs against the men who are outraged of their property, and a smile of general connivance rewards the successful dexterity of the men who invade it. That portion of the annual produce of our soil, which, on a foundation of legitimacy as firm as the property of the soil itself, is allotted to a set of national functionaries—and which, but for them, would all have gone, in the shape of increased revenue,

to the indolent proprietor, is altogether thrown loose from the guardianship of that great principle of reciprocity, on which we strongly suspect that the honesties of this world are mainly supported. The national clergy of England may be considered as standing out of the pale of this guardianship; and the consequence is, that what is most rightfully and most sacredly theirs, is abandoned to the gambol of many thousand depredators; and, in addition to a load of most unmerited obloquy, have they had to sustain all the heartburnings of known and felt injustice; and that intercourse between the teachers and the taught, which ought surely to be an intercourse of peace, and friendship, and righteousness, is turned into a contest between the natural avarice of the one party, and the natural resentments of the other. It is not that we wish our sister church were swept away, for we honestly think, that the overthrow of that establishment would be a severe blow to the Christianity of our land. It is not that we envy that great hierarchy the splendour of her endowments—for better a dinner of herbs, when surrounded by the love of parishioners, than a preferment of stalled dignity, and strife therewith.

It is not either that we look upon her ministers as having at all disgraced themselves by their rapacity; for look to the amount of the encroachments that are made upon them, and you will see that they have carried their privileges with the most exemplary forbearance and moderation. But, from these very encroachments do we infer how lawless a human being will become, when emancipated from the bond of his own interest; how much such a state of things must multiply the temptations to injustice over the face of the country; and how desirable, therefore, that it were put an end to—not by the abolition of that venerable church, but by a fair and liberal commutation of the revenues which support her—not by bringing any blight on the property of her ecclesiastics, but by the removal of a most devouring blight from the worth of her population—that every provocative to injustice may be done away, and the frailty of human principle be no longer left to such a ruinous and such a withering exposure.

This instance we would not have mentioned, but for the sake of adding another experimental

proof to the lesson of our text; and we now hasten onward to the lesson itself, with a few of its applications.

We trust you are convinced, from what has been said, that much of the actual honesty of the world is due to the selfishness of the world. And then you will surely admit, that, in as far as this is the actuating principle, honesty descends from its place as a rewardable, or even as an amiable virtue, and sinks down into the character of a mere prudential virtue—which, so far from conferring any moral exaltation on him by whom it is exemplified, emanates out of a propensity that seems inseparable from the constitution of every sentient being—and by which man is, in one point, assimilated either to the most worthless of his own species, or to those inferior animals among whom worth is unattainable.

And let it not deafen the humbling impression of this argument, that you are not distinctly conscious of the operation of selfishness, as presiding at every step over the honesty of your daily and familiar transactions; and that the only

inward checks against injustice, of which you are sensible, are the aversion of a generous indignancy towards it, and the positive discomfort you would incur by the reproaches of your own conscience. Selfishness, in fact, may have originated and alimented the whole of this virtue that belongs to you, and yet the mind incur the same discomfort by the violation of it, that it would do by the violation of any other of its established habits. And as to the generous indignancy of your feelings against all that is fraudulently and disgracefully wrong, let us never forget, that this may be the nurtured fruit of that common selfishness which links human beings with each other into a relationship of mutual dependance. This may be seen, in all its perfection, among the leagued and sworn banditti of the highway; who, while execrated by society at large for the compact of iniquity into which they have entered, can maintain the most heroic fidelity to the virtues of their own brotherhood—and be, in every way, as lofty and as chivalric with their points of honour, as we are with ours; and elevate as indignant a voice against the worthlessness of him who could be-

tray the secret of their association, or break up any of the securities by which it was held together. And, in like manner, may we be the members of a wider combination, yet brought together by the tie of reciprocal interest; and all the virtues essential to the existence, or to the good of such a combination, may come to be idolized amongst us; and the breath of human applause may fan them into a lustre of splendid estimation; and yet the good man of society on earth be, in common with all his fellows, an utter outcast from the society of heaven—with his heart altogether bereft of that allegiance to God which forms the reigning principle of his unfallen creation—and in a state of entire destitution either as to that love of the Supreme Being, or as to that disinterested love of those around us, which form the graces and the virtues of eternity.

We have not affirmed that there is no such thing as a native and disinterested principle of honour among men. But we have affirmed, on a former occasion, that a sense of honour may be in the heart, and the sense of God be utterly away from

it. And we affirm now, that much of the honest practice of the world is not due to honesty of principle at all, but takes its origin from a baser ingredient of our constitution altogether. How wide is the operation of selfishness on the one hand, and how limited is the operation of abstract principle on the other, it were difficult to determine; and such a labyrinth to man is his own heart, that he may be utterly unable, from his own consciousness, to answer this question. But amid all the difficulties of such an analysis to himself, we ask him to think of another who is unseen by us, but who is represented to us as seeing all things. We know not in what characters this heavenly witness can be more impressively set forth, than as pondering the heart, as weighing the secrets of the heart, as fastening an attentive and a judging eye on all the movements of it, as treasuring up the whole of man's outward and inward history in a book of remembrance; and as keeping it in reserve for that day when, it is said, that the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open; and God shall bring out every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. Your consciousness may not distinctly inform you, in

how far the integrity of your habits is due to the latent operation of selfishness, or to the more direct and obvious operation of honour. But your consciousness may, perhaps, inform you, distinctly enough, how little a share the will of God has in the way of influence on any of your doings. Your own sense and memory of what passes within you may charge you with the truth of this monstrous indictment—that you live without God in the world; that however you may be signalized among your fellows, by that worth of character which is held in highest value and demand amongst the individuals of a mercantile society, it is at least without the influence of a godly principle that you have reached the maturity of an established reputation; that either the proud emotions of rectitude which glow within your bosom are totally untinctured by a feeling of homage to the Deity—or that, without any such emotions, Self is the divinity you have all along worshipped, and your very virtues are so many offerings of reverence at her shrine. If such be, in fact, the nakedness of your spiritual condition, is it not high time, we ask, that you awaken out of this delusion, and

shake the lying spirit of deep and heavy slumber away from you? Is it not high time, when eternity is so fast coming on, that you examine your accounts with God, and seek for a settlement with that Being who will so soon meet your disembodied spirits with the question of—what have you done unto me? And if all the virtues which adorn you are but the subserviencies of time, and of its accommodations—if either done altogether unto yourselves, or done without the recognition of God on the spontaneous instigation of your own feelings—is it not high time that you lean no longer to the securities on which you have rested, and that you seek for acceptance with your Maker on a more firm and unalterable foundation?

This, then, is the terminating object of all the experience that we have tried to set before you. We want it to be a schoolmaster to bring you unto Christ. We want you to open your eyes to the accordancy which obtains between the theology of the New Testament, and the actual state and history of man. Above all, we want you to turn your eyes inwardly upon yourselves,

and there to behold a character without one trace or lineament of godliness—there to behold a heart, set upon totally other things than those which constitute the portion and the reward of eternity—there to behold every principle of action resolvable into the idolatry of self, or, at least, into something independent of the authority of God—there to behold how worthless in their substance are those virtues which look so imposing in their semblance and their display, and draw around them here a popularity and an applause which will all be dissipated into nothing, when hereafter they are brought up for examination to the judgment-seat. We want you, when the revelation of the gospel charges you with the totality and magnitude of your corruption, that you acquiesce in that charge; and that you may perceive the trueness of it, under the disguise of all those hollow and unsubstantial accomplishments with which nature may deck her own fallen and degenerate children. It is easy to be amused, and interested, and intellectually regaled, by an analysis of the human character, and a survey of human society. But it is not so easy to reach the individual conscience with the lesson—we are un-

done. It is not so easy to strike the alarm into your hearts of the present guilt, and the future damnation. It is not so easy to send the pointed arrow of conviction into your bosoms, where it may keep by you, and pursue you like an arrow sticking fast; or so to humble you into the conclusion, that, in the sight of God, you are an accursed thing, as that you may seek unto him who became a curse for you, and as that the preaching of his Cross might cease to be foolishness.

Be assured, then, if you keep by the ground of being justified by your present works, you will perish; and though we may not have succeeded in convincing you of their worthlessness, be assured, that a day is coming, when such a flaw of deceitfulness, in the principle of them all, shall be laid open, as will demonstrate the equity of your entire and everlasting condemnation. To avert the fearfulness of that day is the message of the great atonement sounded in your ears—and the blood of Christ, cleansing from all sin, is offered to your acceptance; and if you turn away from it, you add to the guilt of

a broken law the insult of a neglected gospel. But if you take the pardon of the gospel on the footing of the gospel, then, such is the efficacy of this great expedient, that it will reach an application of mercy farther than the eye of your own conscience ever reached; that it will redeem you from the guilt even of your most secret and unsuspected iniquities; and thoroughly wash you from a taint of sinfulness, more inveterate than, in the blindness of nature, you ever thought of, or ever conceived to belong to you.

But when a man becomes a believer, there are two great events which take place at this great turning point in his history. One of them takes place in heaven—even the expunging of his name from the book of condemnation. Another of them takes place on earth—even the application of such a sanctifying influence to his person, that all old things are done away with him, and all things become new with him. He is made the workmanship of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. He is not merely forgiven the sin of every one evil work of which he had aforetime been guilty, but he is created anew unto the corresponding

good work. And, therefore, if a Christian, will his honesty be purified from that taint of selfishness by which the general honesty of this world is so deeply and extensively pervaded. He will not do this good thing, that any good thing may be done unto him again. He will do it on a simple regard to its own native and independent rectitude. He will do it because it is honourable, and because God wills him so to adorn the doctrine of his Saviour. All his fair dealing, and all his friendship, will be fair dealing and friendship without interest. The principle that is in him will stand in no need of aid from any such auxiliary—but, strong in its own unborrowed resources, will it impress a legible stamp of dignity and uprightness on the whole variety of his transactions in the world. All men find it their advantage, by the integrity of their dealings, to prolong the existence of some gainful fellowship into which they may have entered. But with him, the same unsullied integrity which kept this fellowship together, and sustained the progress of it, will abide with him through its last transactions, and dignify its full and final termination. Most men find, that, without the

reverberation of any mischief on their own heads, they could reduce, beneath the point of absolute justice, the charges of taxation. But he has a conscience both towards God, and towards man, which will not let him; and there is a rigid truth in all his returns, a pointed and precise accuracy in all his payments. When hemmed in with circumstances of difficulty, and evidently tottering to his fall, the demand of nature is, that he should ply his every artifice to secrete a provision for his family. But a Christian mind is incapable of artifice; and the voice of conscience within him will ever be louder than the voice of necessity; and he will be open as day with his creditors, nor put forth his hand to that which is rightfully theirs, any more than he would put forth his hand to the perpetration of a sacrilege; and though released altogether from that tie of interest which binds a man to equity with his fellows, yet the tie of principle will remain with him in all its strength. Nor will it ever be found that he, for the sake of subsistence, will enter into fraud, seeing that, as one of the children of light, he would not, to gain the whole world, lose his own soul.

DISCOURSE IV.

THE GUILT OF DISHONESTY NOT TO BE ESTIMATED BY THE GAIN OF IT.

"He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much."—LUKE xvi. 10.

IT is the fine poetical conception of a late poetical countryman, whose fancy too often grovelled among the despicable of human character—but who, at the same time, was capable of exhibiting, either in pleasing or in proud array, both the tender and the noble of human character—when he says of the man who carried a native unborrowed self-sustained rectitude in his bosom, that "his eye, even turned on empty space, beamed keen with honour." It was affirmed, in the last discourse, that much of the honourable practice of the world rested on the substratum of selfishness; that society was held together in the

exercise of its relative virtues, mainly, by the tie of reciprocal advantage; that a man's own interest bound him to all those average equities which obtained in the neighbourhood around him; and in which, if he proved himself to be glaringly deficient, he would be abandoned by the respect, and the confidence, and the good will, of the people with whom he had to do. It is a melancholy thought, how little the semblance of virtue upon earth betokens the real and substantial presence of virtuous principle among men. But, on the other hand, though it be a rare, there cannot be a more dignified attitude of the soul, than when of itself it kindles with a sense of justice, and the holy flame is fed, as it were, by its own energies; than when man moves onwards in an unchanging course of moral magnanimity, and disdains the aid of those inferior principles by which gross and sordid humanity is kept from all the grosser violations; than when he rejoices in truth as his kindred and congenial element;—so, that though unpeopled of all its terrestrial accompaniments; though he saw no interest whatever to be associated with its fulfilment; though without one prospect either

of fame or of emolument before him, would his eye, even when turned on emptiness itself, still retain the living lustre that had been lighted up in it, by a feeling of inward and independent reverence.

It has already been observed, and that fully and frequently enough, that a great part of the homage which is rendered to integrity in the world, is due to the operation of selfishness. And this substantially is the reason, why the principle of the text has so very slender a hold upon the human conscience. Man is ever prone to estimate the enormity of injustice, by the degree in which he suffers from it. He brings this moral question to the standard of his own interest. A master will bear with all the lesser liberties of his servants, so long as he feels them to be harmless; and it is not till he is awakened to the apprehension of personal injury from the amount or frequency of the embezzlements, that his moral indignation is at all sensibly awakened. And thus it is, that the maxim of our great teacher of righteousness seems to be very much unfelt, or forgotten, in society. Unfaith-

fulness in that which is little, and unfaithfulness in that which is much, are very far from being regarded, as they were by him under the same aspect of criminality. If there be no great hurt, it is felt that there is no great harm. The innocence of a dishonest freedom in respect of morality, is rated by its insignificance in respect of matter. The margin which separates the right from the wrong is remorselessly trodden under foot, so long as each makes only a minute and gentle encroachment beyond the landmark of his neighbour's territory. On this subject there is a loose and popular estimate, which is not at one with the deliverance of the New Testament; a habit of petty invasion on the side of aggressors, which is scarcely felt by them to be at all iniquitous—and even on the part of those who are thus made free with there is a habit of loose and careless toleration. There is, in fact, a negligence or a dormancy of principle among men, which causes this sort of injustice to be easily practised on the one side, and as easily put up with on the other; and, in a general slackness of observation, is this virtue, in its strictness and in its delicacy, completely overborne.

It is the taint of selfishness, then, which has so marred and corrupted the moral sensibility of our world; and the man, if such a man can be, whose "eye, even turned on empty space, beams keen with honour;" and whose homage, therefore, to the virtue of justice, is altogether freed from the mixture of unworthy and interested feelings, will long to render to her, in every instance, a faultless and a completed offering. Whatever his forbearance to others, he could not suffer the slightest blot of corruption upon any doings of his own. He cannot be satisfied with any thing short of the very last jot and tittle of the requirements of equity being fulfilled. He not merely shares in the revolt of the general world against such outrageous departures from the rule of right, as would carry in their train the ruin of acquaintances or the distress of families. Such is the delicacy of the principle within him, that he could not have peace under the consciousness even of the minutest and least discoverable violation. He looks fully and fearlessly at the whole account which justice has against him; and he cannot rest, so long as there is a single article unmet, or a single demand unsatis-

fied. If, in any transaction of his, there was so much as a farthing of secret and injurious reservation on his side, this would be to him like an accursed thing, which marred the character of the whole proceeding, and spread over it such an aspect of evil, as to offend and to disturb him. He could not bear the whisperings of his own heart, if it told him, that, in so much as by one iota of defect, he had balanced the matter unfairly between himself and the unconscious individual with whom he deals. It would lie a burden upon his mind to hurt and to make him unhappy, till the opportunity of explanation had come round, and he had obtained ease to his conscience, by acquitting himself to the full of all his obligations. It is justice in the uprightness of her attitude; it is justice in the onwardness of her path; it is justice disdaining every advantage that would tempt her, by ever so little, to the right or to the left; it is justice spurning the littleness of each paltry enticement away from her, and maintaining herself, without deviation, in a track so purely rectilineal, that even the most jealous and microscopic eye could not find in it the slightest aberration: this is the justice set forth

by our great moral Teacher in the passage now submitted to you; and by which we are told, that this virtue refuses fellowship with every degree of iniquity that is perceptible; and that, were the very least act of unfaithfulness admitted, she would feel as if in her sanctity she had been violated, as if in her character she had sustained an overthrow.

In the further prosecution of this discourse, let us first attempt to elucidate the principle of our text, and then urge it onward to its practical consequences—both as it respects our general relation to God, and as it respects the particular lesson of faithfulness that may be educed from it.

I. The great principle of the text is, that he who has sinned, though to a small amount in respect of the fruit of his transgression—provided he has done so, by passing over a forbidden limit which was distinctly known to him, has, in the act of doing so, incurred a full condemnation in respect of the principle of his transgression. In one word, that the gain of it may be small, while the guilt of it may be great; that the latter

ought not to be measured by the former; but that he who is unfaithful in the least, shall be dealt with, in respect of the offence he has given to God, in the same way as if he had been unfaithful in much.

The first reason which we would assign in vindication of this is, that, by a small act of injustice, the line which separates the right from the wrong, is just as effectually broken over as by a great act of injustice. There is a tendency in gross and corporeal man to rate the criminality of injustice by the amount of its appropriations—to reduce it to a computation of weight and of measure—to count the man who has gained a double sum by his dishonesty, to be doubly more dishonest than his neighbour—to make it an affair of product rather than of principle; and thus to weigh the morality of a character in the same arithmetical balance with number or with magnitude. Now, this is not the rule of calculation on which our Saviour has proceeded in the text. He speaks to the man who is only half an inch within the limit of forbidden ground, in the very same terms by which

he addresses the man who has made the furthest and the largest incursions upon it. It is true, that he is only a little way upon the wrong side of the line of demarcation. But why is he upon it at all? It was in the act of crossing that line, and not in the act of going onwards after he had crossed it—it was then that the contest between right and wrong was entered upon, and then it was decided. That was the instant of time at which principle struck her surrender. The great pull which the man had to make, was in the act of overleaping the fence of separation; and after that was done, justice had no other barrier by which to obstruct his progress over the whole extent of the field which she had interdicted. There might be barriers of a different description. There might be still a revolting of humanity against the sufferings that would be inflicted by an act of larger fraud or depredation. There might be a dread of exposure, if the dishonesty should so swell, in point of amount, as to become more noticeable. There might, after the absolute limit between justice and injustice is broken, be another limit against the extending of a man's encroachments, in a terror of discovery, or in a

sense of interest, or even in the relentings of a kindly or a compunctious feeling towards him who is the victim of injustice. But this is not the limit with which the question of a man's truth, or a man's honesty, has to do. These have already been given up. He may only be a little way within the margin of the unlawful territory, but still he is upon it; and the God who finds him there will reckon with him, and deal with him accordingly. Other principles, and other considerations, may restrain his progress to the very heart of the territory, but justice is not one of them. This he deliberately flung away from him, at that moment when he passed the line of circumvallation; and, though in the neighbourhood of that line, he may hover all his days at the petty work of picking and purloining such fragments as he meets with, though he may never venture himself to a place of more daring or distinguished atrocity, God sees of him, that, in respect of the principle of justice, at least, there is an utter unhingement. And thus it is, that the Saviour, who knew what was in man, and who, therefore, knew all the springs of that moral machinery by which he is

actuated, pronounces of him who was unfaithful in the least, that he was unfaithful also in much.

After the transition is accomplished, the progress will follow of course, just as opportunity invites, and just as circumstances make it safe and practicable. For it is not with justice as it is with generosity, and some of the other virtues. There is not the same graduation in the former as there is in the latter. The man who, other circumstances being equal, gives away a double sum in charity, may, with more propriety, be reckoned doubly more generous than his neighbour; than the man who, with the same equality of circumstances, only ventures on half the extent of fraudulency, can be reckoned only one half as unjust as his neighbour. Each has broken a clear line of demarcation. Each has transgressed a distinct and visible limit which he knew to be forbidden. Each has knowingly forced a passage beyond his neighbour's landmark—and that is the place where justice has laid the main force of her interdict. As it respects the *materiel* of injustice, the question resolves itself into a mere computation of quantity. As it respects the

morale of injustice, the computation is upon other principles. It is upon the latter that our Saviour pronounces himself. And he gives us to understand, that a very humble degree of the former may indicate the latter in all its atrocity. He stands on the breach between the lawful and the unlawful; and he tells us, that the man who enters by a single footstep on the forbidden ground, immediately gathers upon his person the full hue and character of guiltiness. He admits no extenuation of the lesser acts of dishonesty. He does not make right pass into wrong, by a gradual melting of the one into the other. He does not thus obliterate the distinctions of morality. There is no shading off at the margin of guilt, but a clear and vigorous delineation. It is not by a gentle transition that a man steps over from honesty to dishonesty. There is between them a wall rising up unto heaven; and the high authority of heaven must be stormed, ere one inch of entrance can be made into the region of iniquity. The morality of the Saviour never leads him to gloss over the beginnings of crime. His object ever is, as in the text before us, to fortify the limit, to cast a

rampart of exclusion around the whole territory of guilt, and to rear it before the eye of man in such characters of strength and sacredness, as should make them feel that it is impregnable.

The second reason, why he who is unfaithful in the least has incurred the condemnation of him who is unfaithful in much, is, that the littleness of the gain, so far from giving a littleness to the guilt, is in fact a circumstance of aggravation. There is just this difference. He who has committed injustice for the sake of a less advantage, has done it on the impulse of a less temptation. He has parted with his honesty at an inferior price; and this circumstance may go so to equalise the estimate, as to bring it very much to one with the deliverance, in the text, of our great Teacher of righteousness. The limitation between good and evil stood as distinctly before the notice of the small as of the great depredator; and he has just made as direct a contravention to the first reason, when he passed over upon the wrong side of it. And he may have made little of gain by the enterprise, but this does not allay the guilt of it. Nay, by the second reason, this

may serve to aggravate the wrath of the Divinity against him. It proves how small the price is which he sets upon his eternity, and how cheaply he can bargain the favour of God away from him, and how low he rates the good of an inheritance with him, and for what a trifle he can dispose of all interest in his kingdom and in his promises. The very circumstance which gives to his character a milder transgression in the eyes of the world, makes it more odious in the judgment of the sanctuary. The more paltry it is in respect of profit, the more profane it may be in respect of principle. It likens him the more to profane Esau, who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. And thus it is, indeed, most woful to think of such a senseless and alienated world; and how heedlessly the men of it are posting their infatuated way to destruction; and how, for as little gain as might serve them a day, they are contracting as much guilt as will ruin them for ever; and are profoundly asleep in the midst of such designs and such doings, as will form the valid materials of their entire and everlasting condemnation.

It is with argument such as this that we would try to strike conviction among a very numerous class of offenders in society—those who, in the various departments of trust, or service, or agency, are ever practising, in littles, at the work of secret appropriation—those whose hands are in a state of constant defilement, by the putting of them forth to that which they ought to touch not, and taste not, and handle not—those who silently number such pilferments as can pass unnoticed among the perquisites of their office; and who, by an excess in their charges, just so slight as to escape detection—or by a habit of purloining, just so restrained as to elude discovery, have both a conscience very much at ease in their own bosoms, and a credit very fair, and very entire, among their acquaintances around them. They grossly count upon the smallness of their transgression. But they are just going in a small way to hell. They would recoil with violent dislike from the act of a midnight depredator. It is just because terrors, and trials, and executions, have thrown around it the pomp and the circumstance of guilt. But at another bar, and on a day of more dreadful solemnity, their

guilt will be made to stand out in its essential characters, and their condemnation will be pronounced from the lips of Him who judgeth righteously. They feel that they have incurred no outrageous forfeiture of character among men, and this instils a treacherous complacency into their own hearts. But the piercing eye of Him who looketh down from heaven is upon the reality of the question; and He who ponders the secrets of every bosom, can perceive, that the man who recoils only from such a degree of injustice as is notorious, may have no justice whatever in his character. He may have a sense of reputation. He may have the fear of detection and disgrace. He may feel a revolt in his constitution against the magnitude of a gross and glaring violation. He may even share in all the feelings and principles of that conventional kind of morality which obtains in his neighbourhood. But, of that principle which is surrendered by the least act of unfaithfulness, he has no share whatever. He perceives no overawing sacredness in that boundary which separates the right from the wrong. If he only keep decently near, it is a matter of indifference

to him whether he be on this or on that side of it. He can be unfaithful in that which is least. There may be other principles, and other considerations, to restrain him; but certain it is, that it is not now the principle of justice which restrains him from being unfaithful in much. This is given up; and, through a blindness to the great and important principle of our text, this virtue may, in its essential character, be as good as banished from the world. All its protections may be utterly overthrown. The line of defence is effaced by which it ought to have been firmly and scrupulously guarded. The sign-posts of intimation, which ought to warn and to scare away, are planted along the barrier; and when, in defiance to them, the barrier is broken, man will not be checked by any sense of honesty, at least, from expatiating over the whole of the forbidden territory. And thus may we gather from the countless peccadilloes which are so current in the various departments of trade, and service, and agency—from the secret freedoms in which many do indulge, without one remonstrance from their own hearts —from the petty inroads that are daily practised

on the confines of justice, by which its line of demarcation is trodden under foot, and it has lost the moral distinctness, and the moral charm, that should have kept it unviolate—from the exceeding multitude of such offences as are frivolous in respect of the matter of them, but most fearfully important in respect of the principle in which they originate—from the woful amount of that unseen and unrecorded guilt which escapes the cognizance of human law, but, on the application of the touchstone in our text, may be made to stand out in characters of severest condemnation—from instances, too numerous to repeat, but certainly too obvious to be missed, even by the observation of charity, may we gather the frailty of human principle, and the virulence of that moral poison, which is now in such full circulation to taint and to adulterate the character of our species.

Before finishing this branch of our subject, we may observe, that it is with this, as with many other phenomena of the human character, that we are not long in contemplation upon it, without coming in sight of that great character-

istic of fallen man, which meets and forces itself upon us in every view that we take of him—even the great moral disease of ungodliness. It is at the precise limit between the right and the wrong that the flaming sword of God's law is placed. It is there that "Thus saith the Lord" presents itself, in legible characters, to our view. It is there where the operation of his commandment begins; and not at any of those higher gradations, where a man's dishonesty first appals himself by the chance of its detection, or appals others by the mischief and insecurity which it brings upon social life. An extensive fraud upon the revenue, for example, unpopular as this branch of justice is, would bring a man down from his place of eminence and credit in mercantile society. That petty fraud which is associated with so many of those smaller payments, where a lie in the written acknowledgment is both given and accepted, as a way of escape from the legal imposition, circulates at large among the members of the great trading community. In the former, and in all the greater cases of injustice, there is a human restraint, and a human terror, in operation. There

is disgrace and civil punishment to scare away. There are all the sanctions of that conventional morality which is suspended on the fear of man, and the opinion of man; and which, without so much as the recognition of a God, would naturally point its armour against every outrage that could sensibly disturb the securities and the rights of human society. But so long as the disturbance is not sensible—so long as the injustice keeps within the limits of smallness and secrecy—so long as it is safe for the individual to practise it, and, borne along on the tide of general example and connivance, he has nothing to restrain him but that distinct and inflexible word of God, which proscribes all unfaithfulness, and admits of it in no degrees, and no modifications—then, let the almost universal sleep of conscience attest, how little of God there is in the virtue of this world; and how much the peace and the protection of society are owing to such moralities, as the mere selfishness of man would lead him to ordain, even in a community of atheists.

II. Let us now attempt to unfold a few of

the practical consequences that may be drawn from the principle of the text, both in respect to our general relation with God, and in respect to the particular lesson of faithfulness which may be educed from it.

1. There cannot be a stronger possible illustration of our argument, than the very first act of retribution that occurred in the history of our species. "And God said unto Adam, Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it. For in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. But the woman took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat." What is it that invests the eating of a solitary apple with a grandeur so momentous? How came an action, in itself so minute, to be the germe of such mighty consequences? How are we to understand that our first parents, by the doing of a single instant, not only brought death upon themselves, but shed this big and baleful disaster over all their posterity? We may not be able to answer all these questions, but we may at least learn, what a thing of danger it is,

under the government of a holy and inflexible God, to tamper with the limits of obedience. By the eating of that apple a clear requirement was broken, and a distinct transition was made from loyalty to rebellion, and an entrance was effected into the region of sin—and thus did this one act serve like the opening of a gate for a torrent of mighty mischief; and, if the act itself was a trifle, it just went to aggravate its guilt—that, for such a trifle, the authority of God could be despised and trampled on. At all events, his attribute of Truth stood committed to the fulfilment of the threatening; and the very insignificancy of the deed, which provoked the execution of it, gives a sublimer character to the certainty of the fulfilment. We know how much this trait, in the dealings of God with man, has been the jeer of infidelity. But in all this ridicule, there is truly nothing else than the grossness of materialism. Had Adam, instead of plucking one single apple from the forbidden tree, been armed with the power of a malignant spirit, and spread a wanton havock over the face of paradise, and spoiled the garden of its loveliness, and been able to mar and to deform the whole of that

terrestrial creation over which God had so recently rejoiced—the punishment he sustained would have looked, to these arithmetical moralists, a more adequate return for the offence of which he had been guilty. They cannot see how the moral lesson rises in greatness, just in proportion to the humility of the material accompaniments—and how it wraps a sublimer glory around the holiness of the Godhead—and how from the transaction, such as it is, the conclusion cometh forth more nakedly, and, therefore, more impressively, that it is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against the Lawgiver. God said, "Let there be light, and it was light;" and it has ever been regarded as a sublime token of the Deity, that, from an utterance so simple, an accomplishment so quick and so magnificent should have followed. God said, "That he who eateth of the tree in the midst of the garden should die." It appears, indeed, but a little thing, that one should put forth his hand to an apple and taste of it. But a saying of God was involved in the matter—and heaven and earth must pass away, ere a saying of his can pass away; and so the apple became decisive of the fate of a world; and, out

of the very scantiness of the occasion, did there emerge a sublimer display of truth and of holiness. The beginning of the world was, indeed, the period of great manifestations of the Godhead; and they all seem to accord, in style and character, with each other; and in that very history, which has called forth the profane and unthinking levity of many a scorner, may we behold as much of the majesty of principle, as, in the creation of light, we behold of the majesty of power.

But this history furnishes the materials of a contemplation still more practical. If, for this one offence, Adam and his posterity have been so visited—if so rigorously and so inflexibly precise be the spirit of God's administration—if, under the economy of heaven, sin, even in the very humblest of its exhibitions, be the object of an intolerance so jealous and so unrelenting—if the Deity be such as this transaction manifests him to be, disdainful of fellowship even with the very least iniquity, and dreadful in the certainty of all his accomplishments against it—if, for a single transgression, all the promise and all the

felicity of paradise had to be broken up, and the wretched offenders had to be turned abroad upon a world, now changed by the curse into a wilderness, and their secure and lovely home of innocence behoved to be abandoned, and to keep them out a flaming sword had to turn every way, and guard their reaccess to the bowers of immortality—if sin be so very hateful in the eye of unspotted holiness, that, on its very first act, and first appearance, the wonted communion between heaven and earth was interdicted—if that was the time at which God looked on our species with an altered countenance, and one deed of disobedience proved so terribly decisive of the fate and history of a world—what should each individual amongst us think of his own danger, whose life has been one continued habit of disobedience? If we be still in the hands of that God who laid so fell a condemnation on this one transgression, let us just think of our many transgressions, and that every hour we live multiplies the account of them; and that, however they may vanish from our own remembrance, they are still alive in the records of a judge whose eye and whose memory never fail him. Let us

transfer the lesson we have gotten of heaven's jurisprudence from the case of our first parents to our own case. Let us compare our lives with the law of God, and we shall find that our sins are past reckoning. Let us take account of the habitual posture of our souls, as a posture of dislike for the things that are above, and we shall find that our thoughts and our desires are ever running in one current of sinfulness. Let us just make the computation how often we fail in the bidden charity, and the bidden godliness, and the bidden long suffering—all as clearly bidden as the duty that was laid on our first parents—and we shall find, that we are borne down under a mountain of iniquity; that, in the language of the Psalmist, our transgressions have gone over our heads, and, as a heavy burden, are too heavy for us; and if we be indeed under the government of Him who followed up the offence of the stolen apple by so dreadful a chastisement, then is wrath gone out unto the uttermost against every one of us. There is something in the history of that apple which might be brought specially to bear on the case of those small sinners who practise in secret at

the work of their petty depredations. But it also carries in it a great and a universal moral. It tells us that no sin is small. It serves a general purpose of conviction. It holds out a most alarming disclosure of the charge that is against us; and makes it manifest to the conscience of him who is awakened thereby, that, unless God himself point out a way of escape, we are indeed most hopelessly sunk in condemnation. And, seeing that such wrath went out from the sanctuary of this unchangeable God, on the one offence of our first parents, it irresistibly follows, that if we, manifold in guilt, take not ourselves to his appointed way of reconciliation —if we refuse the overtures of Him, who then so visited the one offence through which all are dead, but is now laying before us all that free gift, which is of many offences unto justification —in other words, if we will not enter into peace through the offered Mediator, how much greater must be the wrath that abideth on us?

Now, let the sinner have his conscience schooled by such a contemplation, and there will be no rest whatever for his soul till he find

it in the Saviour. Let him only learn, from the dealings of God with the first Adam, what a God of holiness he himself has to deal with; and let him further learn, from the history of the second Adam, that, to manifest himself as a God of love, another righteousness had to be brought in, in place of that from which man had fallen so utterly away. There was a faultless obedience rendered by Him, of whom it is said, that he fulfilled all righteousness. There was a magnifying of the law by one in human form, who, up to the last jot and tittle of it, acquitted himself of all its obligations. There was a pure, and lofty, and undefiled path, trodden by a holy and harmless Being, who gave not up his work upon earth, till, ere he left it, he could cry out, that It was finished; and so had wrought out for us a perfect righteousness. Now, it forms the most prominent annunciation of the New Testament, that the reward of this righteousness is offered unto all—so that there is not one of us who is not put by the gospel upon the alternative of being either tried by our own merits, or treated according to the merits of Him who became sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be

made the righteousness of God in him. Let the sinner just look unto himself, and look unto the Saviour. Let him advert not to his one, but to his many offences; and that, too, in the sight of a God, who, but for one so slight and so insignificant in respect of the outward description, as the eating of a forbidden apple, threw off a world into banishment, and entailed a sentence of death upon all its generations. Let him learn from this, that for sin, even in its humblest degrees, there exists in the bosom of the Godhead no toleration; and how shall he dare, with the degree and the frequency of his own sin, to stand any longer on a ground, where, if he remain, the fierceness of a consuming fire is so sure to overtake him? The righteousness of Christ is without a flaw, and there he is invited to take shelter. Under the actual regimen, which God has established in our world, it is indeed his only security—his refuge from the tempest, and hiding place from the storm. The only beloved son offers to spread his own unspotted garment as a protection over him; and, if he be rightly alive to the utter nakedness of his moral and spiritual condition, he will indeed make no tarrying till

he be found in Christ, and find that in him there is no condemnation.

Now, it is worthy of remark, that those principles, which shut a man up unto the faith, do not take flight and abandon him, after they have served this temporary purpose. They abide with him, and work their appropriate influence on his character, and serve as the germe of a new moral creation; and we can afterwards detect their operation in his heart and life; so, that if they were present at the formation of a saving belief, they are not less unfailingly present with every true Christian, throughout the whole of his future history, as the elements of a renovated conduct. If it was sensibility to the evil of sin which helped to wean the man from himself, and led him to his Saviour, this sensibility does not fall asleep in the bosom of an awakened sinner, after Christ has given him light—but it grows with the growth, and strengthens with the strength, of his Christianity. If, at the interesting period of his transition from nature to grace, he saw, even in the very least of his offences, a deadly provocation of the Lawgiver, he does not lose

sight of this consideration in his future progress —nor does it barely remain with him, like one of the unproductive notions of an inert and unproductive theory. It gives rise to a fearful jealousy in his heart of the least appearance of evil; and, with every man who has undergone a genuine process of conversion, do we behold the scrupulous avoidance of sin, in its most slender, as well as in its more aggravated forms. If it was the perfection of the character of Christ, who felt that it became him to fulfil all righteousness, that offered him the first solid foundation on which he could lean—then, the same character, which first drew his eye for the purpose of confidence, still continues to draw his eye for the purpose of imitation. At the outset of faith, all the essential moralities of thought, and feeling, and conviction, are in play; nor is there any thing in the progress of a real faith which is calculated to throw them back again into the dormancy out of which they had arisen. They break out, in fact, into more full and flourishing display on every new creature, with every new step, and new evolution, in his mental history. All the principles of the gospel serve, as it were,

to fan and to perpetuate his hostility against sin; and all the powers of the gospel enable him, more and more, to fulfil the desires of his heart, and to carry his purposes of hostility into execution. In the case of every genuine believer, who walks not after the flesh, but after the spirit, do we behold a fulfilling of the righteousness of the law—a strenuous avoidance of sin, in its slightest possible taint or modification—a strenuous performance of duty, up to the last jot and tittle of its exactions—so, that let the untrue professors of the faith do what they will in the way of antinomianism, and let the enemies of the faith say what they will about our antinomianism, the real spirit of the dispensation under which we live is such, that whosoever shall break one of the least of these commandments, and teach men so, is accounted the least—whosoever shall do and teach them is accounted the greatest.

2. Let us, therefore, urge the spirit and the practice of this lesson upon your observation. The place for the practice of it is the familiar and week-day scene. The principle for the spirit of it descends upon the heart, from the sublimest

heights of the sanctuary of God. It is not vulgarizing Christianity to bring it down to the very humblest occupations of human life. It is, in fact, dignifying human life, by bringing it up to the level of Christianity. It may look to some a degradation of the pulpit, when the household servant is told to make her firm stand against the temptation of open doors, and secret opportunities; or when the confidential agent is told to resist the slightest inclination to any unseen freedom with the property of his employers, or to any undiscoverable excess in the charges of his management; or when the receiver of a humble payment is told, that the tribute which is due on every written acknowledgment ought faithfully to be met, and not fictitiously to be evaded. This is not robbing religion of its sacredness, but spreading its sacredness over the face of society. It is evangelizing human life, by impregnating its minutest transactions with the spirit of the gospel. It is strengthening the wall of partition between sin and obedience. It is the Teacher of righteousness taking his stand at the outpost of that territory which he is appointed to defend, and warning his hearers of the danger

that lies in a single footstep of encroachment. It is letting them know, that it is in the act of stepping over the limit, that the sinner throws the gauntlet of his defiance against the authority of God. And though he may deceive himself with the imagination that his soul is safe, because the gain of his injustice is small, such is the God with whom he has to do, that, if it be gain to the value of a single apple, then, within the compass of so small an outward dimension, may as much guilt be enclosed as that which hath brought death into our world, and carried it down in a descending ruin upon all its generations.

It may appear a very little thing, when you are told to be honest in little matters; when the servant is told to keep her hand from every one article about which there is not an express or understood allowance on the part of her superiors; when the dealer is told to lop off the excesses of that minuter fraudulency, which is so currently practised in the humble walks of merchandise; when the workman is told to abstain from those petty reservations of the material of his work, for which he is said to have such

snug and ample opportunity; and when, without pronouncing on the actual extent of these transgressions, all are told to be faithful in that which is least, else, if there be truth in our text, they incur the guilt of being unfaithful in much. It may be thought, that because such dishonesties as these are scarcely noticeable, they are therefore not worthy of notice. But it is just in the proportion of their being unnoticeable by the human eye, that it is religious to refrain from them. These are the cases in which it will be seen, whether the control of the omniscience of God makes up for the control of human observation—in which the sentiment, that thou God seest me, should carry a preponderance through all the secret places of a man's history—in which, when every earthly check of an earthly morality is withdrawn, it should be felt, that the eye of God is upon him, and that the judgment of God is in reserve for him. To him who is gifted with a true discernment of these matters, will it appear, that often, in proportion to the smallness of the doings, is the sacredness of that principle which causes them to be done with integrity; that honesty, in little transactions, bears upon

it more of the aspect of holiness, than honesty in great ones; that the man of deepest sensibility to the obligations of the law, is he who feels the quickening of moral alarm at its slightest violations; that, in the morality of grains and of scruples, there may be a greater tenderness of conscience, and a more heaven-born sanctity, than in that larger morality which flashes broadly and observably upon the world;—and that thus, in the faithfulness of the household maid, or of the apprentice boy, there may be the presence of a truer principle, than there is in the more conspicuous transactions of human business—what they do, being done, not with eye-service —what they do, being done unto the Lord.

And here we may remark, that nobleness of condition is not essential as a school for nobleness of character; nor does man require to be high in office, ere he can gather around his person the worth and the lustre of a high-minded integrity. It is delightful to think, that humble life may be just as rich in moral grace, and moral grandeur, as the loftier places of society; that as true a dignity of principle may be earned by him

who, in homeliest drudgery, plies his conscientious task, as by him who stands entrusted with the fortunes of an empire; that the poorest menial in the land, who can lift a hand unsoiled by the pilferments that are within his reach, may have achieved a victory over temptation, to the full as honourable as the proudest patriot can boast, who has spurned the bribery of courts away from him. It is cheering to know, from the heavenly judge himself, that he who is faithful in the least, is faithful also in much; and that thus, among the labours of the field and of the work-shop, it is possible for the peasant to be as bright in honour as the peer, and have the chivalry of as much truth and virtue to adorn him.

And, as this lesson is not little in respect of principle, so neither is it little in respect of influence on the order and well-being of human society. He who is unjust in the least, is, in respect of guilt, unjust also in much. And to reverse this proposition, as it is done in the first clause of our text—he who is faithful in that which is least, is, in respect both of righteous principle and of actual observation, faithful also

in much. Who is the man to whom I would most readily confide the whole of my property? He who would most disdain to put forth an injurious hand on a single farthing of it. Who is the man from whom I would have the least dread of any unrighteous encroachment? He, all the delicacies of whose principle are awakened, when he comes within sight of the limit which separates the region of justice from the region of injustice. Who is the man whom we shall never find among the greater degrees of iniquity? He who shrinks with sacred abhorrence from the lesser degrees of it. It is a true, though a homely maxim of economy, that if we take care of our small sums, our great sums will take care of themselves. And, to pass from our own things to the things of others, it is no less true, that if principle should lead us all to maintain the care of strictest honesty over our neighbour's pennies, then will his pounds lie secure from the grasp of injustice, behind the barrier of a moral impossibility. This lesson, if carried into effect among you, would so strengthen all the ramparts of security between man and man, as to make them utterly impassable; and therefore, while, in the matter of it, it

may look, in one view, as one of the least of the commandments, it, in regard both of principle and of effect, is, in another view of it, one of the greatest of the commandments. And we therefore conclude with assuring you, that nothing will spread the principle of this commandment to any great extent throughout the mass of society, but the principle of godliness. Nothing will secure the general observation of justice amongst us, in its punctuality and in its preciseness, but such a precise Christianity as many affirm to be puritanical. In other words, the virtues of society, to be kept in a healthful and prosperous condition, must be upheld by the virtues of the sanctuary. Human law may restrain many of the grosser violations. But without religion among the people, justice will never be in extensive operation as a moral principle. A vast proportion of the species will be as unjust as the vigilance and the severities of law allow them to be. A thousand petty dishonesties, which never will, and never can be brought within the cognizance of any of our courts of administration, will still continue to derange the business of human life, and to stir up all the heartburnings

of suspicion and resentment among the members of human society. And it is, indeed, a triumphant reversion awaiting the Christianity of the New Testament, when it shall become manifest as day, that it is her doctrine alone, which, by its searching and sanctifying influence, can so moralise our world—as that each may sleep secure in the lap of his neighbour's integrity, and the charm of confidence, between man and man, will at length be felt in the business of every town, and in the bosom of every family.

DISCOURSE V.

ON THE GREAT CHRISTIAN LAW OF RECIPROCITY BETWEEN MAN AND MAN.

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."—MATT. vii. 12.

THERE are two great classes in human society, between whom there lie certain mutual claims and obligations, which are felt by some to be of very difficult adjustment. There are those who have requests of some kind or other to make; and there are those to whom the requests are made, and with whom there is lodged the power either to grant or to refuse them. Now, at first sight, it would appear, that the firm exercise of this power of refusal is the only barrier by which the latter class can be secured against the indefinite encroachments of the former; and that, if this were removed, all the safeguards of right

and property would be removed along with it. The power of refusal, on the part of those who have the right of refusal, may be abolished by an act of violence, on the part of those who have it not; and then, when this happens in individual cases, we have the crimes of assault and robbery; and when it happens on a more extended scale, we have anarchy and insurrection in the land. Or the power of refusal may be taken away by an authoritative precept of religion; and then might it still be matter of apprehension, lest our only defence against the inroads of selfishness and injustice were as good as given up, and lest the peace and interest of families should be laid open to a most fearful exposure, by the enactments of a romantic and impracticable system. Whenever this is apprehended, the temptation is strongly felt, either to rid ourselves of the enactments altogether, or at least to bring them down in nearer accommodation to the feelings and the conveniencies of men.

And Christianity, on the very first blush of it, appears to be precisely such a religion. It seems to take away all lawfulness of resistance from

the possessor, and to invest the demander with such an extent of privilege, as would make the two classes of society, to which we have just now adverted, speedily change places. And this is the true secret of the many laborious deviations that have been attempted, in this branch of morality, on the obvious meaning of the New Testament. This is the secret of those many qualifying clauses, by which its most luminous announcements have been beset, to the utter darkening of them. This it is which explains the many sad invasions that have been made on the most manifest and undeniable literalities of the law and of the testimony. And our present text, among others, has received its full share of mutilation, and of what may be called "dressing up," from the hands of commentators—it having wakened the very alarms of which we have just spoken, and called forth the very attempts to quiet and to subdue them. Surely, it has been said, we can never be required to do unto others what they have no right, and no reason, to expect from us. The demand must not be an extravagant one. It must lie within the limits of moderation. It must be such as, in the estimation

of every justly thinking person, is counted fair in the circumstances of the case. The principle on which our Saviour, in the text, rests the obligation of doing any particular thing to others, is, that we wish others to do that thing unto us. But this is too much for an affrighted selfishness; and, for her own protection, she would put forth a defensive sophistry upon the subject; and in place of that distinctly announced principle, on which the Bible both directs and specifies what the things are which we should do unto others, does she substitute another principle entirely—which is, merely to do unto others such things as are fair, and right, and reasonable.

Now, there is one clause of this verse which would appear to lay a positive interdict on all these qualifications. How shall we dispose of a phrase, so sweeping and universal in its import, as that of "all things whatsoever?" We cannot think that such an expression as this was inserted for nothing, by him who has told us, that "cursed is every one who taketh away from the words of this book." There is no distinction laid down between things fair, and things unfair—between

things reasonable, and things unreasonable. Both are comprehended in the "all things whatsoever." The signification is plain and absolute, that, let the thing be what it may, if you wish others to do that thing for you, it lies imperatively upon you to do the very same thing for them also.

But, at this rate, you may think that the whole system of human intercourse would go into unhingement. You may wish your next-door neighbour to present you with half his fortune. In this case, we know not how you are to escape from the conclusion, that you are bound to present him with the half of yours. Or you may wish a relative to burden himself with the expenses of all your family. It is then impossible to save you from the positive obligation, if you are equally able for it, of doing the same service to the family of another. Or you may wish to engross the whole time of an acquaintance in personal attendance upon yourself. Then, it is just your part to do the same extent of civility to another who may desire it. These are only a few specifications, out of the manifold

varieties, whether of service or of donation, which are conceivable between one man and another; nor are we aware of any artifice of explanation by which they can possibly be detached from the "all things whatsoever" of the verse before us. These are the literalities which we are not at liberty to compromise—but are bound to urge, and that simply, according to the terms in which they have been conveyed to us by the great Teacher of righteousness. This may raise a sensitive dread in many a bosom. It may look like the opening of a floodgate, through which a torrent of human rapacity would be made to set in on the fair and measured domains of property, and by which all the fences of legality would be overthrown. It is some such fearful anticipation as this which causes casuistry to ply its wily expedients, and busily to devise its many limits, and its many exceptions, to the morality of the New Testament. And yet, we think it possible to demonstrate of our text, that no such modifying is requisite; and that, though admitted strictly and rigorously as the rule of our daily conduct, it

would lead to no practical conclusions which are at all formidable.

For, what is the precise circumstance which lays the obligation of this precept upon you? There may be other places in the Bible where you are required to do things for the benefit of your neighbour, whether you would wish your neighbour to do these things for your benefit or not. But this is not the requirement here. There is none other thing laid upon you in this place, than that you should do that good action in behalf of another, which you would like that other to do in behalf of yourself. If you would not like him to do it for you, then there is nothing in the compass of this sentence now before you, that at all obligates you to do it for him. If you would not like your neighbour to make so romantic a surrender to your interest, as to offer you to the extent of half his fortune, then there is nothing in that part of the gospel code which now engages us, that renders it imperative upon you to make the same offer to your neighbour. If you would positively recoil, in all the reluctance of ingenuous delicacy, from the selfishness

of laying on a relation the burden of the expenses of all your family, then this is not the good office that you would have him to do unto you; and this, therefore, is not the good office which the text prescribes you to do unto him. If you have such consideration for another's ease, and another's convenience, that you could not take the ungenerous advantage of so much of his time for your accommodation, there may be other verses in the Bible which point to a greater sacrifice, on your part, for the good of others, than you would like these others to make for yours; but, most assuredly, this is not the verse which imposes that sacrifice. If you would not that others should do these things on your account, then these things form no part of the "all things whatsoever" you would that men should do unto you; and, therefore, they form no part of the "all things whatsoever" that you are required, by this verse, to do unto them. The bare circumstance of your positively not wishing that any such services should be rendered unto you, exempts you, as far as the single authority of this precept is concerned, from the obligation of rendering these services to others. This is

the limitation to the extent of those services which are called for in the text; and it is surely better, that every limitation to a commandment of God's, should be defined by God himself, than that it should be drawn from the assumptions of human fancy, or from the fears and the feelings of human convenience.

Let a man, in fact, give himself up to a strict and literal observation of the precept in this verse, and it will impress a two-fold direction upon him. It will not only guide him to certain performances of good in behalf of others, but it will guide him to the regulation of his own desires of good from them. For his desires of good from others are here set up as the measure of his performances of good to others. The more selfish and unbounded his desires are, the larger are those performances with the obligation of which he is burdened. Whatsoever he would that others should do unto him, he is bound to do unto them; and, therefore, the more he gives way to ungenerous and extravagant wishes of service from those who are around him, the heavier and more insupportable is the load of

duty which he brings upon himself. The commandment is quite imperative, and there is no escaping from it; and if he, by the excess of his selfishness, should render it impracticable, then the whole punishment, due to the guilt of casting aside the authority of this commandment, follows in that train of punishment which is annexed to selfishness. There is one way of being relieved from such a burden. There is one way of reducing this verse to a moderate and practicable requirement; and that is, just to give up selfishness—just to stifle all ungenerous desires—just to moderate every wish of service or liberality from others, down to the standard of what is right and equitable; and then there may be other verses in the Bible, by which we are called to be kind even to the evil and the unthankful. But, most assuredly, this verse lays upon us none other thing, than that we should do such services for others as are right and equitable.

The more extravagant, then, a man's wishes of accommodation from others are, the wider is the distance between him and the bidden performances of our text. The separation of him

from his duty increases at the rate of two bodies receding from each other by equal and contrary movements. The more selfish his desires of service are from others, the more feeble, on that very account, will be his desires of making any surrender of himself to them, and yet the greater is the amount of that surrender which is due. The poor man, in fact, is moving himself away from the rule; and the rule is just moving as fast away from the man. As he sinks, in the scale of selfishness, beneath the point of a fair and moderate expectation from others, does the rule rise, in the scale of duty, with its demands upon him; and thus there is rendered to him double for every unfair and ungenerous imposition that he would make on the kindness of those who are around him.

Now, there is one way, and a very effectual one, of getting these two ends to meet. Moderate your own desires of service from others, and you will moderate, in the same degree, all those duties of service to others which are measured by these desires. Have the delicacy to abstain from any wish of encroachment on the

convenience or property of another. Have the high-mindedness to be indebted for your own support to the exertions of your own honourable industry, rather than to the dastardly habit of preying on the simplicity of those around you. Have such a keen sense of equity, and such a fine tone of independent feeling, that you could not bear to be the cause of hardship or distress to a single human creature, if you could help it. Let the same spirit be in you, which the Apostle wanted to exemplify before the eye of his disciples, when he coveted no man's gold, or silver, or apparel; when he laboured not to be chargeable to any of them; but wrought with his own hands, rather than be burdensome. Let this mind be in you, which was also in the Apostle of the Gentiles; and then, the text before us will not come near you with a single oppressive or impracticable requirement. There may be other passages, where you are called to go beyond the strict line of justice, or common humanity, in behalf of your suffering brethren. But this passage does not touch you with any such preceptive imposition: and you, by moderating your wishes from others down to what is fair and

equitable, do, in fact, reduce the rule which binds you to act according to the measure of these wishes, down to a rule of precise and undeviating equity.

The operation is somewhat like that of a governor, or fly, in mechanism. This is a very happy contrivance, by which all that is defective or excessive in the motion, is confined within the limits of equability; and every tendency, in particular, to any mischievous acceleration, is restrained. The impulse given by this verse to the conduct of man among his fellows, would seem, to a superficial observer, to carry him to all the excesses of a most ruinous and quixotic benevolence. But let him only look to the skilful adaptation of the fly. Just suppose the control of moderation and equity to be laid upon his own wishes, and there is not a single impulse given to his conduct beyond the rate of moderation and equity. You are not required here to do all things whatsoever in behalf of others, but to do all things whatsoever for them, that you would should be done unto yourself. This is the check by which the whole of the bidden movement is

governed, and kept from running out into any hurtful excess. And such is the beautiful operation of that piece of moral mechanism that we are now employed in contemplating, that while it keeps down all the aspirations of selfishness, it does, in fact, restrain every extravagancy, and impresses on its obedient subjects no other movement, than that of an even and inflexible justice.

This rule of our Saviour's, then, prescribes moderation to our desires of good from others, as well as generosity to our doings in behalf of others; and makes the first the measure of obligation to the second. It may thus be seen how easily, in a Christian society, the whole work of benevolence could be adjusted, so as to render it possible for the givers not only to meet, but also to overpass, the wishes and expectations of the receivers. The rich man may have a heavier obligation laid upon him by other precepts of the New Testament; but, by this precept, he is not bound to do more for the poor man, than what he himself would wish, in like circumstances, to be done for him. And let the poor

man, on the other hand, wish for no more than what a Christian ought to wish for; let him work and endure to the extent of nature's sufferance, rather than beg—and only beg, rather than that he should starve; and in such a state of principle among men, a tide of beneficence would so go forth upon all the vacant places in society, as that there should be no room to receive it. The duty of the rich, as connected with this administration, is of so direct and positive a character, as to obtrude itself at once on the notice of the Christian moralist. But the poor also have a duty in it—to which we feel ourselves directed by the train of argument which we have now been prosecuting—and a duty, too, we think, of far greater importance even than the other, to the best interests of mankind.

For, let us first contrast the rich man who is ungenerous in his doings, with the poor man who is ungenerous in his desires; and see from which of the two it is, that the cause of charity receives the deadlier infliction. There is, it must be admitted, an individual to be met with occasionally, who represents the former of these two

But there is a far wider mischief inflicted on the cause of charity, by the poor man who is ungenerous in his desires; by him, whom every act of kindness is sure to call out to the reaction of some new demand, or new expectation; by him, on whom the hand of a giver has the effect, not of appeasing his wants, but of inflaming his rapacity; by him who, trading among the sympathies of the credulous, can dexterously appropriate for himself a portion tenfold greater than what would have blest and brightened the aspect of many a deserving family. Him we denounce as the worst enemy of the poor. It is he whose ravenous gripe wrests from them a far more abundant benefaction, than is done by the most lordly and unfeeling proprietor in the land. He is the arch-oppressor of his brethren; and the amount of the robbery which he has practised upon them, is not to be estimated by the alms which he has monopolised, by the food, or the raiment, or the money, which he has diverted to himself, from the more modest sufferers around him. He has done what is infinitely worse than turning aside the stream of charity. He has closed its floodgates. He has chilled and alien-

ated the hearts of the wealthy, by the gall of bitterness which he has infused into this whole ministration. A few such harpies would suffice to exile a whole neighbourhood from the attentions of the benevolent, by the distrust and the jealousy wherewith they have poisoned their bosoms, and laid an arrest on all the sensibilities that else would have flowed from them. It is he who, ever on the watch and on the wing about some enterprise of imposture, makes it his business to work and to prey on the compassionate principles of our nature; it is he who, in effect, grinds the faces of the poor, and that, with deadlier severity than even is done by the great baronial tyrant, the battlements of whose castle seem to frown, in all the pride of aristocracy, on the territory that is before it. There is, at all times, a kindliness of feeling ready to stream forth, with a tenfold greater liberality than ever, on the humble orders of life; and it is he, and such as he, who have congealed it. He has raised a jaundiced medium between the rich and the poor, in virtue of which, the former eye the latter with suspicion; and there is not a man who wears the garb, and prefers the applications

of poverty, that has not suffered from the worthless impostor who has gone before him. They are, in fact, the deceit, and the indolence, and the low sordidness of a few, who have made outcasts of the many, and locked against them the feelings of the wealthy in a kind of iron imprisonment. The rich man who is ungenerous in his doings, keeps back one labourer from the field of charity. But a poor man who is ungenerous in his desires, can expel a thousand labourers in disgust away from it. He sheds a cruel and extended blight over the fair region of philanthropy; and many have abandoned it, who, but for him, would fondly have lingered thereupon; very many, who, but for the way in which their simplicity has been tried and trampled upon, would still have tasted the luxury of doing good unto the poor, and made it their delight, as well as their duty, to expend and expatiate among their habitations.

We say not this to exculpate the rich; for it is their part not to be weary in well-doing, but to prosecute the work and the labour of love under every discouragement. Neither do we say this

to the disparagement of the poor; for the picture we have given is of the few out of the many; and the closer the acquaintance with humble life becomes, will it be the more seen of what a high pitch of generosity even the very poorest are capable. They, in truth, though perhaps they are not aware of it, can contribute more to the cause of charity, by the moderation of their desires, than the rich can by the generosity of their doings. They, without, it may be, one penny to bestow, might obtain a place in the record of heaven, as the most liberal benefactors of their species. There is nothing in the humble condition of life they occupy, which precludes them from all that is great or graceful in human charity. There is a way in which they may equal, and even outpeer, the wealthiest of the land, in that very virtue of which wealth alone has been conceived to have the exclusive inheritance. There is a pervading character in humanity which the varieties of rank do not obliterate; and as, in virtue of the common corruption, the poor man may be as effectually the rapacious despoiler of his brethren, as the man of opulence above him—so, there is a common excellence attainable

by both; and through which, the poor man may, to the full, be as splendid in generosity as the rich, and yield a far more important contribution to the peace and comfort of society.

To make this plain—it is in virtue of a generous doing on the part of a rich man, when a sum of money is offered for the relief of want; and it is in virtue of a generous desire on the part of a poor man, when this money is refused; when, with the feeling, that his necessities do not just warrant him to be yet a burden upon others, he declines to touch the offered liberality; when, with a delicate recoil from the unlooked-for proposal, he still resolves to put it for the present away, and to find, if possible, for himself a little longer; when, standing on the very margin of dependance, he would yet like to struggle with the difficulties of his situation, and to maintain this severe but honourable conflict, till hard necessity should force him to surrender. Let the money which he has thus so nobly shifted from himself take some new direction to another; and who, we ask, is the giver of it? The first and most obvious reply is, that it is he who owned

it: but, it is still more emphatically true, that it is he who has declined it. It came originally out of the rich man's abundance; but it was the noble-hearted generosity of the poor man that handed it onwards to its final destination. He did not emanate the gift; but it is just as much that he has not absorbed it, but left it to find its full conveyance to some neighbour poorer than himself, to some family still more friendless and destitute than his own. It was given the first time out of an overflowing fulness. It is given the second time out of stinted and self-denying penury. In the world's eye, it is the proprietor who bestowed the charity. But, in heaven's eye, the poor man who waived it away from himself to another is the more illustrious philanthropist of the two. The one gave it out of his affluence. The other gave it out of the sweat of his brow. He rose up early, and sat up late, that he might have it to bestow on a poorer than himself; and without once stretching forth a giver's hand to the necessities of his brethren, still is it possible, that by him, and such as him, may the main burden of this world's benevolence be borne.

It need scarcely be remarked, that, without supposing the offer of any sum made to a poor man who is generous in his desires, he, by simply keeping himself back from the distributions of charity, fulfils all the high functions which we have now ascribed to him. He leaves the charitable fund untouched for all that distress which is more clamorous than his own; and we, therefore, look, not to the original givers of the money, but to those who line, as it were, the margin of pauperism, and yet firmly refuse to enter it—we look upon them as the pre-eminent benefactors of society, who narrow, as it were, by a wall of defence, the ground of human dependance, and are, in fact, the guides and the guardians of all that opulence can bestow.

Thus it is, that when Christianity becomes universal, the doings of the one party, and the desires of the other, will meet and overpass. The poor will wish for no more than the rich will be delighted to bestow; and the rule of our text, which every real Christian at present finds so practicable, will, when carried over the face of society, bind all the members of it into one con-

senting brotherhood. The duty of doing good to others will then coalesce with that counterpart duty which regulates our desires of good from them; and the work of benevolence will, at length, be prosecuted without that alloy of rapacity on the one hand, and distrust on the other, which serves so much to fester and disturb the whole of this ministration. To complete this adjustment, it is in every way as necessary to lay all the incumbent moralities on those who ask, as on those who confer; and never till the whole text, which comprehends the wishes of man as well as his actions, wield its entire authority over the species, will the disgusts and the prejudices, which form such a barrier between the ranks of human life, be effectually done away. It is not by the abolition of rank, but by assigning to each rank its duties, that peace, and friendship, and order, will at length be firmly established in our world. It is by the force of principle, and not by the force of some great political overthrow, that a consummation so delightful is to be attained. We have no conception whatever, that, even in millennial days, the diversities of wealth and station will at length

be equalised. On looking forward to the time when kings shall be the nursing fathers, and queens the nursing mothers of our church, we think that we can behold the perspective of as varied a distribution of place and property as before. In the pilgrimage of life, there will still be the moving procession of the few charioted in splendour on the highway, and the many pacing by their side along the line of the same journey. There will, perhaps, be a somewhat more elevated footpath for the crowd; and there will be an air of greater comfort and sufficiency amongst them; and the respectability of evident worth and goodness will sit upon the countenance of this general population. But, bating these, we look for no great change in the external aspect of society. It will only be a moral and a spiritual change. Kings will retain their sceptres, and nobles their coronets; but, as they float in magnificence along, will they look with benignant feeling on the humble wayfarers; and the honest salutations of regard and reverence will arise to them back again; and, should any weary passenger be ready to sink unfriended on his career, will he, at one time, be borne onwards by his fellows on

the pathway, and, at another, will a shower of beneficence be made to descend from the crested equipage that overtakes him. It is Utopianism to think, that, in the ages of our world which are yet to come, the outward distinctions of life will not all be upholden. But it is not Utopianism, it is Prophecy to aver, that the breath of a new spirit will go abroad over the great family of mankind—so, that while, to the end of time, there shall be the high and the low in every passing generation, will the charity of kindred feelings, and of a common understanding, create a fellowship between them on their way, till they reach that heaven where human love shall be perfected, and all human greatness is unknown.

In various places of the New Testament, do we see the checks of spirit and delicacy laid upon all extravagant desires. Our text, while it enjoins the performance of good to others, up to the full measure of your desires of good from them, equally enjoins the keeping down of these desires to the measure of your performances. If Christian dispensers had only to do with Christian recipients, the whole work of benevo-

lence would be with ease and harmony carried on. All that was unavoidable—all that came from the hand of Providence—all that was laid upon our suffering brethren by the unlooked-for visitations of accident or disease—all that pain and misfortune which necessarily attaches to the constitution of the species—all this the text most amply provides for; and all this a Christian society would be delighted to stretch forth their means for the purpose of alleviating or doing away.

We should not have dwelt so long upon this lesson, were it not for the essential Christian principle that is involved in it. The morality of the gospel is not more strenuous on the side of the duty of giving of this world's goods when it is needed, than it is against the desire of receiving when it is not needed. It is more blessed to give than to receive, and therefore less blessed to receive than to give. For the enforcement of this principle among the poorer brethren, did Paul give up a vast portion of his apostolical time and labour; and that he might be an ensample to the flock of working with his own

hands, rather than be burdensome, did he set himself down to the occupation of a tent-maker. That lesson is surely worthy of engrossing one sermon of an uninspired teacher, for the sake of which an inspired Apostle of the Gentiles engrossed as much time as would have admitted the preparation and the delivery of many sermons. But there is no more striking indication of the whole spirit and character of the gospel in this matter, than the example of him who is the author of it—and of whom we read these affecting words, that he came into the world not to be ministered unto, but to minister. It is a righteous thing in him who has of this world's goods, to minister to the necessities of others: but it is a still higher attainment of righteousness in him who has nothing but the daily earnings of his daily work to depend upon, so to manage and to strive that he shall not need to be ministered unto. Christianity overlooks no part of human conduct; and by providing for this in particular, does it, in fact, overtake, and that with a precept of utmost importance, the habit and condition of a very extended class in human society. And never does the gospel so exhibit

its adaptation to our species—and never does virtue stand in such characters of strength and sacredness before us—as when impregnated with the evangelical spirit, and urged by evangelical motives, it takes its most direct sanction from the life and doings of the Saviour.

And he who feels as he ought, will bear with cheerfulness all that the Saviour prescribes, when he thinks how much it is for him that the Saviour has borne. We speak not of his poverty all the time that he lived upon earth. We speak not of those years when, a houseless wanderer in an unthankful world, he had not where to lay his head. We speak not of the meek and uncomplaining sufferance with which he met the many ills that oppressed the tenor of his mortal existence. But we speak of that awful burden which crushed and overwhelmed its termination. We speak of that season of the hour and the power of darkness, when it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to make his soul an offering for sin. To estimate aright the endurance of him who himself bore our infirmities, would we ask of any individual to recollect some deep and awful pe-

riod of abandonment in his own history—when that countenance which at one time beamed and brightened upon him from above, was mantled in thickest darkness—when the iron of remorse entered into his soul—and, laid on a bed of torture, he was made to behold the evil of sin, and to taste of its bitterness. Let him look back, if he can, on this conflict of many agitations, and then figure the whole of this mental wretchedness to be borne off by the ministers of vengeance into hell, and stretched out unto eternity. And if, on the great day of expiation, a full atonement was rendered, and all that should have fallen upon us was placed upon the head of the sacrifice—let him hence compute the weight and the awfulness of those sorrows which were carried by him on whom the chastisement of our peace was laid, and who poured out his soul unto the death for us. If ever a sinner, under such a visitation, shall again emerge into peace and joy in believing —if he ever shall again find his way to that fountain which is opened in the house of Judah —if he shall recover once more that sunshine of the soul, which, on the days that are past, disclosed to him the beauties of holiness here, and

the glories of heaven hereafter—if ever he shall hear with effect, in this world, that voice from the mercy-seat, which still proclaims a welcome to the chief of sinners, and beckons him afresh to reconciliation—O! how gladly then should he bear, throughout the remainder of his days, the whole authority of the Lord who bought him; and bind for ever to his own person that yoke of the Saviour which is easy, and that burden which is light.

DISCOURSE VI.

ON THE DISSIPATION OF LARGE CITIES.

"Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."—EPHES. v. 6.

THERE is one obvious respect in which the standard of morality amongst men, differs from that pure and universal standard which God hath set up for the obedience of his subjects. Men will not demand very urgently of each other, that, which does not very nearly, or very immediately, affect their own personal and particular interest. To the violations of justice, or truth, or humanity, they will be abundantly sensitive, because these offer a most visible and quickly felt encroachment on this interest. And thus it is, that the social virtues, even without any direct sanction from God at all, will ever draw a certain

portion of respect and reverence around them; and that a loud testimony of abhorrence may often be heard from the mouths of ungodly men, against all such vices as may be classed under the general designation of vices of dishonesty.

Now, the same thing does not hold true of another class of vices, which may be termed the vices of dissipation. These do not touch, in so visible or direct a manner, on the security of what man possesses, and of what man has the greatest value for. But man is a selfish being, and therefore it is, that the ingredient of selfishness gives a keenness to his estimation of the evil and of the enormity of the former vices, which is scarcely felt at all in any estimation he may form of the latter vices. It is very true, at the same time, that if one were to compute the whole amount of the mischief they bring upon society, it would be found, that the profligacies of mere dissipation go very far to break up the peace, and enjoyment, and even the relative virtues of the world; and that, if these profligacies were reformed, it would work a mighty augmentation on the temporal good both of individuals and families. But

the connexion between sobriety of character, and the happiness of the community, is not so apparent, because it is more remote than the connexion which obtains between integrity of character, and the happiness of the community; and man being not only a selfish but a short-sighted being, it follows, that while the voice of execration may be distinctly heard against every instance of fraud or of injustice, instances of licentiousness may occur on every side of us, and be reported on the one hand with the utmost levity, and be listened to, on the other, with the most entire and complacent toleration.

Here, then, is a point, in which the general morality of the world is at utter and irreconcileable variance with the law of God. Here is a case, in which the voice that cometh forth from the tribunal of public opinion pronounces one thing, and the voice that cometh forth from the sanctuary of God pronounces another. When there is an agreement between these two voices, the principle on which obedience is rendered to their joint and concurring authority, may be altogether equivocal; and, with religious and

irreligious men, you may observe an equal exhibition of all the equities, and all the civilities of life. But when there is a discrepancy between these two voices—or when the one attaches a criminality to certain habits of conduct, and is not at all seconded by the testimony of the other—then do we escape the confusion of mingled motives, and mingled authorities. The character of the two parties emerges out of the ambiguity which involved it. The law of God points, it must be allowed, as forcible an anathema against the man of dishonesty, as against the man of dissipation. But the chief burden of the world's anathema is laid on the head of the former; and therefore it is, that, on the latter ground, we meet with more discriminative tests of principle, and gather more satisfying materials for the question of—who is on the side of the Lord of hosts, and who is against him?

The passage we have now submitted to you, looks hard on the votaries of dissipation. It is like eternal truth, lifting up its own proclamation, and causing it to be heard amid the errors and the delusions of a thoughtless world. It is

like the Deity himself, looking forth, as he did, from a cloud, on the Egyptians of old, and troubling the souls of those who are lovers of pleasures, more than lovers of God. It is like the voice of heaven, crying down the voice of human society, and sending forth a note of alarm amongst its giddy generations. It is like the unrolling of a portion of that book of higher jurisprudence, out of which we shall be judged on the day of our coming account, and setting before our eyes an enactment, which, if we disregard it, will turn that day into the day of our coming condemnation. The words of man are adverted to in this solemn proclamation of God, against all unlawful and all unhallowed enjoyments, and they are called words of vanity. He sets aside the authority of human opinion altogether; and, on an irrevocable record, has he stamped such an assertion of the authority that belongeth to himself only, as serves to the end of time for an enduring memorial of his will; and as commits the truth of the Lawgiver to the execution of a sentence of wrath against all whose souls are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. There is, in fact, a peculiar deceitfulness in the matter

before us; and, in this verse, are we warned against it—"Let no man deceive you with vain words; for, because of these things, the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience."

In the preceding verse, there is such an enumeration as serves to explain what the things are which are alluded to in the text; and it is such an enumeration, you should remark, as goes to fasten the whole terror, and the whole threat, of the coming vengeance—not on the man who combines in his own person all the characters of iniquity which are specified, but on the man who realizes any one of these characters. It is not, you will observe, the conjunction *and*, but the conjunction *or*, which is interposed between them. It is not as if we said, that the man who is dishonest, and licentious, and covetous, and unfeeling, shall not inherit the kingdom of God—but the man who is either dishonest, or licentious, or covetous, or unfeeling. On the single and exclusive possession of any one of these attributes, will God deal with you as with an enemy. The plea, that we are a little thoughtless, but we have a good heart, is conclusively cut

asunder by this portion of the law and of the testimony. And in a corresponding passage, in the ninth verse of the sixth chapter of Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, the same peculiarity is observed in the enumeration of those who shall be excluded from God's favour, and have the burden of God's wrath laid on them through eternity. It is not the man who combines all the deformities of character which are there specified, but the man who realizes any one of the separate deformities. Some of them are the vices of dishonesty, others of them are the vices of dissipation; and, as if aware of a deceitfulness from this cause, he, after telling us that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God, bids us not be deceived—for that neither the licentious, nor the abominable, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

He who keepeth the whole law, but offendeth in one point, says the Apostle James, is guilty of all. The truth is, that his disobedience on this one point may be more decisive of the state

of his loyalty to God, than his keeping of all the rest. It may be the only point on which the character of his loyalty is really brought to the trial. All his conformities to the law of God might have been rendered, because they thwarted not his own inclination; and, therefore, would have been rendered, though there had been no law at all. The single infraction may have taken place in the only case where there was a real competition between the will of the creature, and the will of the Creator; and the event proves to which of the two the right of superiority is awarded. Allegiance to God in truth is but one principle, and may be described by one short and summary expression; and one act of disobedience may involve in it such a total surrender of the principle, as goes to dethrone God altogether from the supremacy which belongs to him. So that the account between a creature and the Creator is not like an account made up of many items, where the expunging of one item would only make one small and fractional deduction from the whole sum of obedience. If you reserve but a single item from this account, and another makes a principle of

completing and rendering up the whole of it, then your character varies from his not by a slight shade of difference, but stands contrasted with it in direct and diametric opposition. We perceive, that, while with him the will of God has the mastery over all his inclinations, with you there is, at least, one inclination which has the mastery over God; that, while in his bosom there exists a single and subordinating principle of allegiance to the law, in yours there exists another principle, which, on the coming round of a fit opportunity, developes itself in an act of transgression; that, while with him God may be said to walk and to dwell in him, with you there is an evil visitant, who has taken up his abode in your heart, and lodges there either in a state of dormancy or of action, according to circumstances; that, while with him the purpose is honestly proceeded on, of doing nothing which God disapproves, with you there is a purpose not only different, but opposite, of doing something which he disapproves. On this single difference is suspended not a question of degree, but a question of kind. There are presented to us not two hues of the same colour, but two colours,

just as broadly contrasted with each other as light and darkness. And such is the state of the alternative between a partial and an unreserved obedience, that while God imperatively claims the one as his due, he looks on the other as an expression of defiance against him, and against his sovereignty.

It is the very same in civil government. A man renders himself an outcast by one act of disobedience. He does not need to accumulate upon himself the guilt of all the higher atrocities in crime, ere he forfeits his life to the injured laws of his country. By the perpetration of any one of them is the whole vengeance of the state brought to bear upon his person, and sentence of death is pronounced on a single murder, or forgery, or act of violent depredation.

And let us ask you just to reflect on the tone and spirit of that man towards his God, who would palliate, for example, the vices of dissipation to which he is addicted, by alleging his utter exemption from the vices of dishonesty, to which he is not addicted. Just think of the real

disposition and character of his soul, who can say, "I will please God, but only when, in so doing, I also please myself; or I will do homage to his law, but just in those instances by which I honour the rights, and fulfil the expectations, of society; or I will be decided by his opinion of the right and the wrong, but just when the opinion of my neighbourhood lends its powerful and effective confirmation. But in other cases, when the matter is reduced to a bare question between man and God, when he is the single party I have to do with, when his will and his wrath are the only elements which enter into the deliberation, when judgment, and eternity, and the voice of him who speaketh from heaven are the only considerations at issue—then do I feel myself at greater liberty, and I shall take my own way, and walk in the counsel of mine own heart, and after the sight of my own eyes." O! be assured, that when all this is laid bare on the day of reckoning, and the discerner of the heart pronounces upon it, and such a sentence is to be given, as will make it manifest to the consciences of all assembled, that true and righteous are the judgments of God—there is many a creditable

man who has passed through the world with the plaudits and the testimonies of all his fellows, and without one other flaw upon his reputation but the very slender one of certain harmless foibles, and certain good-humoured peculiarities, who, when brought to the bar of account, will stand convicted there of having made a divinity of his own will, and spent his days in practical and habitual atheism.

And this argument is not at all affected by the actual state of sinfulness and infirmity into which we have fallen. It is true, even of saints on earth, that they commit sin. But to be overtaken in a fault is one thing; to commit that fault with the deliberate consent of the mind is another. There is in the bosom of every true Christian a strenuous principle of resistance to sin, and it belongs to the very essence of the principle that it is resistance to *all* sin. It admits of no voluntary indulgence to one sin more than to another. Such an indulgence would not only change the character of what may be called the elementary principle of regeneration, but would destroy it altogether. The man who has entered on a

course of Christian discipleship, carries on an unsparing and universal war with all iniquity. He has chosen Christ for his alone master, and he struggles against the ascendency of every other. It is his sustained and habitual exertion in following after him to forsake all; so that if his performance were as complete as his endeavour, you would not merely see a conformity to some of the precepts, but a conformity to the whole law of God. At all events, the endeavour is an honest one, and so far successful, that sin has not the dominion; and sure we are, that, in such a state of things, the vices of dissipation can have no existence. These vices can be more effectually shunned, and more effectually surmounted, for example, than the infirmities of an unhappy temper. So that, if dissipation still attaches to the character, and appears in the conduct of any individual, we know not a more decisive evidence of the state of that individual as being one of the many who crowd the broad way that leadeth to destruction. We look no further to make out our estimate of his present condition as being that of a rebel, and of his future prospect as being that of spending an eternity in hell.

There is no halting between two opinions in this matter. The man who enters a career of dissipation throws down the gauntlet of defiance to his God. The man who persists in this career keeps on the ground of hostility against him.

Let us now endeavour to trace the origin, the progress, and the effects, of a life of dissipation.

First. Then it may be said of a very great number of young, on their entrance into the business of the world, that they have not been enough fortified against its seducing influences by their previous education at home. Generally speaking, they come out from the habitation of their parents unarmed and unprepared for the contest which awaits them. If the spirit of this world's morality reign in their own family, then it cannot be, that their introduction into a more public scene of life will be very strictly guarded against those vices on which the world placidly smiles, or at least regards with silent toleration. They may have been told, in early boyhood, of the infamy of a lie. They may have had the virtues of punctuality, and of economy, and of

regular attention to business, pressed upon their observation. They may have heard a uniform testimony on the side of good behaviour, up to the standard of such current moralities as obtain in their neigbourhood; and this, we are ready to admit, may include in it a testimony against all such excesses of dissipation as would unfit them for the prosecution of this world's interests. But let us ask, whether there are not parents, who, after they have carried the work of discipline thus far, forbear to carry it any farther; who, while they would mourn over it as a family trial should any son of theirs fall a victim to excessive dissipation, yet are willing to tolerate the lesser degrees of it; who, instead of deciding the question on the alternative of his heaven or his hell, are satisfied with such a measure of sobriety as will save him from ruin and disgrace in this life; who, if they can only secure this, have no great objection to the moderate share he may take in this world's conformities; who feel, that in this matter there is a necessity and a power of example against which it is vain to struggle, and which must be acquiesced in; who deceive themselves with the fancied impossibility of stopping the evil

in question—and say, that business must be gone through; and that, in the prosecution of it, exposures must be made; and that, for the success of it, a certain degree of accommodation to others must be observed; and seeing that it is so mighty an object for one to widen the extent of his connexions, he must neither be very retired nor very peculiar—nor must his hours of companionship be too jealously watched or inquired into—nor must we take him too strictly to task about engagements, and acquaintances, and expenditure —nor must we forget, that while sobriety has its time and its season in one period of life, indulgence has its season in another; and we may fetch from the recollected follies of our own youth, a lesson of connivance for the present occasion; and altogether there is no help for it; and it appears to us, that absolutely and totally to secure him from ever entering upon scenes of dissipation, you must absolutely and totally withdraw him from the world, and surrender all his prospects of advancement, and give up the object of such a provision for our families as we feel to be a first and most important concern with us.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," says the Bible, "and all other things shall be added unto you." This is the promise which the faith of a Christian parent will rest upon; and in the face of every hazard to the worldly interests of his offspring, will he bring them up in the strict nurture and admonition of the Lord; and he will loudly protest against iniquity, in all its degrees, and in all its modifications; and while the power of discipline remains with him, will it ever be exerted on the side of pure, faultless, undeviating obedience; and he will tolerate no exception whatever; and he will brave all that looks formidable in singularity, and all that looks menacing in separation from the custom and countenance of the world; and feeling that his main concern is to secure for himself and for his family a place in the city which hath foundations, will he spurn all the maxims, and all the plausibilities, of a contagious neighbourhood away from him. He knows the price of his Christianity, and it is that he must break off conformity with the world—nor for any paltry advantage which it has to offer, will he compromise the eternity of his children. And

let us tell the parents of another spirit, and another principle, that they are as good as incurring the guilt of a human sacrifice; that they are offering up their children at the shrine of an idol; that they are parties in provoking the wrath of God against them here; and on the day when that wrath is to be revealed, shall they hear not only the moanings of their despair, but the outcries of their bitterest execration. On that day, the glance of reproach from their own neglected offspring will throw a deeper shade of wretchedness over the dark and boundless futurity that lies before them. And if, at the time when prophets rung the tidings of God's displeasure against the people of Israel, it was denounced as the foulest of all their abominations that they caused their children to pass through the fire unto Moloch—know ye parents, who, in placing your children on some road to gainful employment, have placed them without a sigh in the midst of depravity, so near and so surrounding, that, without a miracle, they must perish, you have done an act of idolatry to the God of this world; you have commanded your household, after you, to worship him as the great divinity

of their lives; and you have caused your children to make their approaches unto his presence —and, in so doing, to pass through the fire of such temptations as have destroyed them.

We do not wish to offer you an overcharged picture on this melancholy subject. What we now say is not applicable to all. Even in the most corrupt and crowded of our cities, parents are to be found, who nobly dare the surrender of every vain and flattering illusion, rather than surrender the Christianity of their children. And what is still more affecting, over the face of the country do we meet with such parents, who look on this world as a passage to another, and on all the members of their household as fellow-travellers to eternity along with them; and who, in this true spirit of believers, feel the salvation of their children to be, indeed, the burden of their best and their dearest interest; and who, by prayer, and precept, and example, have strenuously laboured with their souls, from the earliest light of their understanding; and have taught them to tremble at the way of evil doers, and to have no fellowship with those who

keep not the commandments of God—nor is there a day more sorrowful in the annals of this pious family, than when the course of time has brought them onwards to the departure of their eldest boy—and he must bid adieu to his native home, with all the peace, and all the simplicity, which abound in it—and as he eyes in fancy the distant town whither he is going, does he shrink as from the thought of an unknown wilderness—and it is his firm purpose to keep aloof from the dangers and the profligacies which deform it—and, should sinners offer to entice him, not to consent, and never, never, to forget the lessons of a father's vigilance, the tenderness of a mother's prayers.

Let us now, in the next place, pass from that state of things which obtains among the young at their outset into the world, and take a look of that state of things which obtains after they have got fairly introduced into it—when the children of the ungodly, and the children of the religious, meet on one common arena—when business associates them together in one chamber, and the omnipotence of custom lays it upon them all to

meet together at periodic intervals, and join in the same parties, and the same entertainments—when the yearly importation of youths from the country falls in with that assimilating mass of corruption which has got so firm and so rooted an establishment in the town—when the frail and unsheltered delicacies of the timid boy have to stand a rude and a boisterous contest with the hardier depravity of those who have gone before him—when ridicule, and example, and the vain words of a delusive sophistry, which palliates in his hearing the enormity of vice, are all brought to bear upon his scruples, and to stifle the remorse he might feel when he casts his principle and his purity away from him—when, placed as he is in a land of strangers, he finds, that the tenure of acquaintanceship, with nearly all around him, is, that he render himself up in a conformity to their doings—when a voice, like the voice of protecting friendship, bids him to the feast; and a welcome, like the welcome of honest kindness, hails his accession to the society; and a spirit, like the spirit of exhilarating joy, animates the whole scene of hospitality before him; and hours of rapture roll

successively away on the wings of merriment and jocularity, and song; and after the homage of many libations has been rendered to honour, and fellowship, and patriotism, impurity is at length proclaimed in full and open cry, as one presiding divinity, at the board of their social entertainment.

And now it remains to compute the general result of a process, which we assert of the vast majority of our young, on their way to manhood, that they have to undergo. The result is, that the vast majority are initiated into all the practices, and describe the full career of dissipation. Those who have imbibed from their fathers the spirit of this world's morality, are not sensibly arrested in this career, either by the opposition of their own friends, or by the voice of their own conscience. Those who have imbibed an opposite spirit, and have brought it into competition with an evil world, and have at length yielded, have done so, we may well suppose, with many a sigh, and many a struggle, and many a look of remembrance on those former years when they were taught to lisp the prayer of infancy, and

were trained in a mansion of piety to a reverence for God, and for all his ways; and, even still, will a parent's parting advice haunt his memory, and a letter from the good old man revive the sensibilities which at one time guarded and adorned him; and, at times, will the transient gleam of remorse lighten up its agony within him; and when he contrasts the profaneness and depravity of his present companions, with the sacredness of all he ever heard or saw in his father's dwelling, it will almost feel as if conscience were again to resume her power, and the revisiting spirit of God to call him back again from the paths of wickedness; and on his restless bed will the images of guilt conspire to disturb him, and the terrors of punishment offer to scare him away; and many will be the dreary and dissatisfied intervals when he shall be forced to acknowledge, that, in bartering his soul for the pleasures of sin, he has bartered the peace and enjoyment of the world along with it. But, alas! the entanglements of companionship have got hold of him; and the inveteracy of habit tyrannizes over all his purposes; and the stated opportunity again comes round; and the loud

laugh of his partners in guilt chases, for another season, all his despondency away from him; and the infatuation gathers upon him every month; and a hardening process goes on within his heart; and the deceitfulness of sin grows apace; and he at length becomes one of the sturdiest and most unrelenting of her votaries; and he, in his turn, strengthens the conspiracy that is formed against the morals of a new generation; and all the ingenuous delicacies of other days are obliterated; and he contracts a temperament of knowing, hackneyed, unfeeling depravity: and thus the mischief is transmitted from one year to another, and keeps up the guilty history of every place of crowded population.

And let us here speak one word to those seniors in depravity—those men who give to the corruption of acquaintances, who are younger than themselves, their countenance and their agency; who can initiate them without a sigh in the mysteries of guilt, and care not though a parent's hope should wither and expire under the contagion of their ruffian example. It is only upon their own conversion that we can

speak to them the pardon of the gospel. It is only if they themselves are washed, and sanctified, and justified, that we can warrant their personal deliverance from the wrath that is to come. But under all the concealment which rests on the futurities of God's administration, we know, that there are degrees of suffering in hell—and that, while some are beaten with few stripes, others are beaten with many. And surely, if they who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever, we may be well assured, that they who patronize the cause of iniquity—they who can beckon others to that way which leadeth on to the chambers of death—they who can aid and witness, without a sigh, the extinction of youthful modesty—surely, it may well be said of such, that on them a darker frown will fall from the judgment-seat, and through eternity will they have to bear the pains of a fiercer indignation.

Having thus looked to the commencement of a course of dissipation, and to its progress, let us now, in the third place, look to its usual termination. We speak not at present of the coming

death, and of the coming judgment, but of the change which takes place on many a votary of licentiousness, when he becomes what the world calls a reformed man; and puts on the decencies of a sober and domestic establishment; and bids adieu to the pursuits and the profligacies of youth, not because he has repented of them, but because he has outlived them. You all perceive how this may be done without one movement of the heart, or of the understanding, towards God —that it is done by many, though duty to him be not in all their thoughts—that the change, in this case, is not from the idol of pleasure unto God, but only from one idol to another—and that, after the whole of this boasted transformation, we may still behold the same body of sin and of death, and only a new complexion thrown over it. There may be the putting on of sobriety, but there is no putting on of godliness. It is a common and an easy transition to pass from one kind of disobedience to another, but it is not so easy to give up that rebelliousness of the heart which lies at the root of all disobedience. It may be easy, after the wonted course of dissipation is ended, to hold out another aspect

altogether in the eye of acquaintances; but it is not so easy to recover that shock, and that overthrow, which the religious principle sustains, when a man first enters the world, and surrenders himself to the power of its enticements. Such were some of you, says the Apostle, but ye are washed, and sanctified, and justified. Our reformed man knows not the meaning of such a process; and, most assuredly, has not at all realised it in the history of his own person. We will not say what new object he is running after. It may be wealth, or ambition, or philosophy; but it is nothing connected with the interest of his soul. It bears no reference whatever to the concerns of that great relationship which obtains between the creature and the Creator. The man has withdrawn, and perhaps for ever, from the scenes of dissipation, and has betaken himself to another way—but still it is his own way. It is not the will or the way of God that he is yet caring for. Such a man may bid adieu to profligacy in his own person. But he lifts up the light of his countenance on the profligacy of others. He gives it the whole weight and authority of his connivance. He

wields, we will say it, such an instrumentality of seduction over the young, as, though not so alarming, is far more dangerous than the undisguised attempts of those who are the immediate agents of corruption. The formal and deliberate conspiracy of those who club together, at stated terms of companionship, may be all seen, and watched, and guarded against. But how shall we pursue this conspiracy into its other ramifications? How shall we be able to neutralise that insinuating poison which distils from the lips of grave and respectable citizens? How shall we be able to dissipate that gloss which is thrown by the smile of elders and superiors over the sins of forbidden indulgence? How can we disarm the bewitching sophistry which lies in all these evident tokens of complacency, on the part of advanced and reputable men? How is it possible to tract the progress of this sore evil, throughout all the business and intercourse of society? How can we stem the influence of evil communications, when the friend, and the patron, and the man who has cheered and signalised us by his polite invitations, turns his own family-table into a nursery of licentiousness?

How can we but despair of ever witnessing on earth a pure and a holy generation, when even parents will utter their polluting levities in the hearing of their own children; and vice, and humour, and gaiety, are all indiscriminately blended into one conversation; and a loud laugh, from the initiated and the uninitiated in profligacy, is ever ready to flatter and to regale the man who can thus prostitute his powers of entertainment? O! for an arm of strength to demolish this firm and far spread compact of iniquity; and for the power of some such piercing and prophetic voice, as might convince our reformed men of the baleful influence they cast behind them on the morals of the succeeding generation.

We, at the same time, have our eye perfectly open to that great external improvement which has taken place, of late years, in the manners of society. There is not the same grossness of conversation. There is not the same impatience for the withdrawment of him, who, asked to grace the outset of an assembled party, is compelled, at a certain step in the process of convivi-

ality, by the obligations of professional decency, to retire from it. There is not so frequent an exaction of this as one of the established proprieties of social or of fashionable life. And if such an exaction was ever laid by the omnipotence of custom on a minister of Christianity, it is such an exaction as ought never, never, to be complied with. It is not for him to lend the sanction of his presence to a meeting with which he could not sit to its final termination. It is not for him to stand associated, for a single hour, with an assemblage of men who begin with hypocrisy, and end with downright blackguardism. It is not for him to watch the progress of the coming ribaldry, and to hit the well selected moment when talk, and turbulence, and boisterous merriment, are on the eve of bursting forth upon the company, and carrying them forward to the full acmé and uproar of their enjoyment. It is quite in vain to say, that he has only sanctified one part of such an entertainment. He has as good as given his connivance to the whole of it, and left behind him a discharge in full of all its abominations; and, therefore, be they who they may, whether they rank among the proudest aris-

tocracy of our land, or are charioted in splendour along, as the wealthiest of the citizens, it is his part to keep as purely and indignantly aloof from such society as this, as he would from the vilest and most debasing associations of profligacy.

And now the important question comes to be put: what is the likeliest way of setting up a barrier against this desolating torrent of corruption, into which there enter so many elements of power and strength, that, to the general eye, it looks altogether irresistible? It is easier to give a negative, than an affirmative answer to this question. And, therefore, it shall be our first remark, that the mischief never will be effectually combated by any expedient separate from the growth and the transmission of personal Christianity throughout the land. If no addition be made to the stock of religious principle in a country, then the profligacy of a country will make its obstinate stand against all the mechanism of the most skilful, and plausible, and well looking contrivances. It must not be disguised from you, that it does not lie within the compass either of prisons or penitentiaries to work any

sensible abatement on the wickedness of our existing generation. The operation must be of a preventive, rather than of a corrective tendency. It must be brought to bear upon boyhood; and be kept up through that whole period of random exposures through which it has to run, on its way to an established condition in society; and a high tone of moral purity must be infused into the bosom of many individuals; and their agency will effect, through the channels of family and social connexion, what never can be effected by any framework of artificial regulations, so long as the spirit and character of society remain what they are. In other words, the progress of reformation will never be sensibly carried forward beyond the progress of personal Christianity in the world; and, therefore, the question resolves itself into the likeliest method of adding to the number of Christian parents who may fortify the principles of their children at their first outset in life—of adding to the number of Christian young men, who might nobly dare to be singular, and to perform the angelic office of guardians and advisers to those who are younger than themselves—of adding to the number of Chris-

tians in middle and advanced life, who might, as far as in them lies, alter the general feeling and countenance of society; and blunt the force of that tacit but most seductive testimony, which has done so much to throw a palliative veil over the guilt of a life of dissipation.

Such a question cannot be entered upon, at present, in all its bearings, and in all its generality. And we must, therefore, simply satisfy ourselves with the object, that as we have attempted already to reproach the indifference of parents, and to reproach the unfeeling depravity of those young men who scatter their pestilential levities around the whole circle of their companionship, we may now shortly attempt to lay upon the men of middle and advanced life, in general society, their share of responsibility for the morals of the rising generation. For the promotion of this great cause, it is not at all necessary to school them into any nice or exquisite contrivances. Could we only give them a desire towards it, and a sense of obligation, they would soon find their own way to the right exercise of their own influence in for-

warding the interests of purity and virtue among the young. Could we only affect their consciences on this point, there would be almost no necessity whatever to guide or enlighten their understanding. Could we only get them to be Christians, and to carry their Christianity into their business, they would then feel themselves invested with a guardianship; and that time, and pains, and attention, ought to be given to the fulfilment of its concerns. It is quite in vain to ask, as if there was any mystery, or any helplessness about it, "What can they do?" For, is it not the fact most palpably obvious, that much can be done even by the mere power of example? Or might not the master of any trading establishment send the pervading influence of his own principles among some, at least, of the servants and auxiliaries who belong to it? Or can he, in no degree whatever, so select those who are admitted, as to ward off much contamination from the branches of his employ? Or might not he so deal out his encouragement to the deserving, as to confirm them in all their purposes of sobriety? Or might not he interpose the shield of his countenance and his testi-

mony between a struggling youth and the ridicule of his acquaintances? Or, by the friendly conversation of half an hour, might not he strengthen within him every principle of virtuous resistance? By these, and by a thousand other expedients, which will readily suggest themselves to him who has the good will, might not a healing water be sent forth through the most corrupted of all our establishments; and it be made safe for the unguarded young to officiate in its chambers; and it be made possible to enter upon the business of the world without entering on such a scene of temptation, as to render almost inevitable the vice of the world, and its impiety, and its final and everlasting condemnation? Would Christians only be open and intrepid, and carry their religion into their merchandise; and furnish us with a single hundred of such houses in this city, where the care and character of the master formed a guarantee for the sobriety of all his dependents, it would be like the clearing out of a piece of cultivated ground in the midst of a frightful wilderness; and parents would know whither they could repair with confidence for the settlement of their offspring;

and we should behold, what is mightily to be desired, a line of broad and visible demarcation between the church and the world; and an interest so precious as the immortality of children, would no longer be left to the play of such fortuitous elements, as operated at random throughout the confused mass of a mingled and indiscriminate society. And thus, the pieties of a father's house might bear to be transplanted even into the scenes of ordinary business; and instead of withering, as they do at present, under a contagion which spreads in every direction, and fills up the whole face of the community, they might flourish in that moral region which was occupied by a peculiar people, and which they had reclaimed from a world that lieth in wickedness.

DISCOURSE VII.

ON THE VITIATING INFLUENCE OF THE HIGHER UPON THE LOWER ORDERS OF SOCIETY.

"Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but wo unto him through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones."—LUKE xvii. 1, 2.

To offend another, according to the common acceptation of the words, is to displease him. Now, this is not its acceptation in the verse before us, nor in several other verses of the New Testament. It were coming nearer to the scriptural meaning of the term, had we, instead of offence and offending, adopted the terms, scandal and scandalising. But the full signification of the phrase, to offend another, is to cause him to fall from the faith and obedience of the gospel. It may be such a falling away as that a man recovers himself—like the disciples, who were all offended in Christ, and forsook him; and, after a

season of separation, were at length re-established in their discipleship. Or it may be such a falling away as that there is no recovery—like those in the gospel of John, who, offended by the sayings of our Saviour, went back, and walked no more with him. If you put such a stumbling-block in the way of a neighbour, who is walking on a course of Christian discipleship, as to make him fall, you offend him. It is in this sense that our Saviour uses the word, when he speaks of your own right hand, or your own right eye, offending you. They may do so, by giving you an occasion to fall. And what is here translated offend, is, in the first epistle to the Corinthians, translated, to make to offend; where Paul says, "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no more flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

The little ones to whom our Saviour alludes, in this passage, he elsewhere more fully particularises, by telling us, that they are those who believe in him. There is no call here for entering into any controversy about the doctrine of perseverance. It is not necessary, either for the

purpose of explaining, or of giving force to the practical lesson of the text now submitted to you. We happen to be as much satisfied with the doctrine, that he who hath a real faith in the gospel of Christ will never fall away, as we are satisfied with the truth of any identical proposition. If a professing disciple do, in fact, fall away, this is a phenomenon which might be traced to an essential defect of principle at the first; which proves, in fact, that he made the mistake of one principle for another; and that, while he thought he had the faith, it was not that very faith of the New Testament which is unto salvation. There might have been the semblance of a work of grace, without its reality. Such a work, if genuinely begun, will be carried onwards even unto perfection. But this is a point on which it is not at all necessary, at present, for us to dogmatize. We are led, by the text, to expatiate on the guilt of that one man who has wrecked the interest of another man's eternity. Now, it may be very true, that if the second has actually entered within the strait gate, it is not in the power of the first, with all his artifices, and all his temptations, to draw him out again.

But instead of having entered the gate, he may only be on the road that leads to it; and it is enough, amid the uncertainties which, in this life, hang over the question of—who are really believers, and who are not? that it is not known in which of these two conditions the little one is; and that, therefore, to seduce him from obedience to the will of Christ, may, in fact, be to arrest his progress towards Christ, and to draw him back unto the perdition of his soul. The whole guilt of the text may be realised by him who keeps back another from the church, where he might have heard, and heard with acceptance, that word of life which he has not yet accepted; or by him, whose influence or whose example detains, in the entanglement of any one sin, the acquaintance who is meditating an outset on the path of decided Christianity—seeing, that every such outset will land in disappointment those who, in the act of following after Christ, do not forsake all; or by him who tampers with the conscience of an apparently zealous and confirmed disciple, so as to seduce him into some habitual sin, either of neglect or of performance —seeing, that the individual who, but for this

seduction, might have cleaved fully unto the Lord, and turned out a prosperous and decided Christian, has been led to put a good conscience away from him—and so, by making shipwreck of his faith, has proved to the world, that it was not the faith which could obtain the victory. It is true, that it is not possible to seduce the elect. But even this suggestion, perverse and unjust as it would be in its application, is not generally present to the mind of him who is guilty of the attempt to seduce, or of the act which carries a seducing influence along with it. The guilt with which he is chargeable, is that of an indifference to the spiritual and everlasting fate of others. He is wilfully the occasion of causing those who are the little ones, or, for any thing he knows, might have been the little ones of Christ, to fall; and it is against him that our Saviour, in the text, lifts not a cool but an impassioned testimony. It is of him that he utters one of the most severe and solemn denunciations of the gospel.

If this text were thoroughly pursued into its manifold applications, it would be found to lay

a weight of fearful responsibility upon us all. We are here called upon not to work out our own salvation, but to compute the reflex influence of all our works, and of all our ways, on the principles of others. And when one thinks of the mischief which this influence might spread around it, even from Christians of chiefest reputation; when one thinks of the readiness of man to take shelter in the example of an acknowledged superior; when one thinks that some inconsistency of ours might seduce another into such an imitation as overbears the reproaches of his own conscience, and as, by vitiating the singleness of his eye, makes the whole of his body, instead of being full of light, to be full of darkness; when one takes the lesson along with him into the various conditions of life he may be called by Providence to occupy, and thinks, that if, either as a parent surrounded by his family, or as a master by the members of his establishment, or as a citizen by the many observers of his neighbourhood around him, he shall either speak such words, or do such actions, or administer his affairs in such a way as is unworthy of his high and immortal destination, that then a

taint of corruption is sure to descend from such an exhibition, upon the immortals who are on every side of him; when one thinks of himself as the source and the centre of a contagion which might bring a blight upon the graces and the prospects of other souls besides his own—surely this is enough to supply him with a reason why, in working out his own personal salvation, he should do it with fear, and with watchfulness, and with much trembling.

But we are now upon the ground of a higher and more delicate conscientiousness, than is generally to be met with. Whereas, our object, at present, is to expose certain of the grosser offences which abound in society, and which spread a most dangerous and ensnaring influence among the individuals who compose it. To this we have been insensibly led, by the topics of that discourse which we addressed to you on a former occasion; and when it fell in our way to animadvert on the magnitude of that man's guilt, who, either by his example, or his connivance, or his direct and formal tuition, can speed the entrance of the yet unpractised young on a

career of dissipation. And whether he be a parent, who, trenched in this world's maxims, can, without a struggle, and without a sigh, leave his helpless offspring to take their random and unprotected way through this world's conformities; or whether he be one of those seniors in depravity, who can cheer on his more youthful companion to a surrender of all those scruples, and all those delicacies, which have hitherto adorned him; or whether he be a more aged citizen, who, having run the wonted course of intemperance, can cast an approving eye on the corruption throughout all its stages, and give a tenfold force to all its allurements, by setting up the authority of grave and reformed manhood upon its side; in each of these characters do we see an offence that is pregnant with deadliest mischief to the principles of the rising generation: and while we are told by our text, that, for such offences, there exists some deep and mysterious necessity—insomuch, that it is impossible but that offences must come—yet, let us not forget to urge on every one sharer in this work of moral contamination, that never does the meek and gentle Saviour speak in terms more threat-

ening, or more reproachful, than when he speaks of the enormity of such misconduct. There cannot, in truth, be a grosser outrage committed on the order of God's administration, than that which he is in the habit of inflicting. There cannot, surely, be a directer act of rebellion, than that which multiplies the adherents of its own cause, and which swells the hosts of the rebellious. There cannot be made to rest a feller condemnation on the head of iniquity, than that which is sealed by the blood of its own victims, and its own proselytes. Nor should we wonder when that is said of such an agent for iniquity which is said of the betrayer of our Lord. It were better for him that he had not been born. It were better for him, now that he is born, could he be committed back again to deep annihilation. Rather than that he should offend one of these little ones, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.

This is one case of such offences as are adverted to in the text. Another and still more specific is beginning, we understand, to be exem-

plified in our own city, though it has not attained to the height or to the frequency at which it occurs in a neighbouring metropolis. We allude to the doing of week-day business upon the Sabbath. We allude to that violence which is rudely offered to the feelings and the associations of sacredness, by those exactions that an ungodly master lays at times on his youthful dependents —when those hours which they wont to spend in church, they are called upon to spend in the counting-house—when that day, which ought to be a day of piety, is turned into a day of posting and of penmanship—when the rules of the decalogue are set aside, and utterly superseded by the rules of the great trading establishment; and every thing is made to give way to the hurrying emergency of orders, and clearances, and the demands of instant correspondence. Such is the magnitude of this stumbling-block, that many is the young man who has here fallen to rise no more—that, at this point of departure, he has so widened his distance from God, as never, in fact, to return to him—that, in this distressing contest between principle and necessity, the final blow has been given to his religious

principles—that the master whom he serves, and under whom he earns his provision for time, has here wrested the whole interest of his eternity away from him—that, from this moment, there gathers upon his soul the complexion of a hardier and more determined impiety—and conscience once stifled now speaks to him with a feebler voice—and the world obtains a firmer lodgement in his heart—and, renouncing all his original tenderness about Sabbath, and Sabbath employments, he can now, with the thorough unconcern of a fixed and familiarised proselyte, keep equal pace by his fellows throughout every scene of profanation—and he who wont to tremble and recoil from the freedoms of irreligion with the sensibility of a little one, may soon become the most daringly rebellious of them all—and that Sabbath which he has now learned, at one time, to give to business, he, at another, gives to unhallowed enjoyments—and it is turned into a day of visits and excursions, given up to pleasure, and enlivened by all the mirth and extravagance of holiday—and, when sacrament is proclaimed from the city pulpits, he, the apt, the well trained disciple of his corrupt and cor-

rupting superior, is the readiest to plan the amusements of the coming opportunity, and among the very foremost in the ranks of emigration—and though he may look back, at times, to the Sabbath of his father's pious house, yet the retrospect is always becoming dimmer, and at length it ceases to disturb him—and thus the alienation widens every year, till, wholly given over to impiety, he lives without God in the world.

And were we asked to state the dimensions of that iniquity which stalks regardlessly, and at large, over the ruin of youthful principles—were we asked to find a place in the catalogue of guilt for a crime, the atrocity of which is only equalled, we understand, by its frequency—were we called to characterise the man who, so far from attempting one counteracting influence against the profligacy of his dependents, issues, from the chair of authority on which he sits, a commandment, in the direct face of a commandment from God—the man who has chartered impiety in articles of agreement, and has vested himself with a property in that time which only belongs to the Lord of the Sabbath—were we

asked to look to the man who could thus overbear the last remnants of remorse in a struggling and unpractised bosom, and glitter in all the ensigns of a prosperity that is reared on the violated consciences of those who are beneath him—O! were the question put, to whom shall we liken such a man? or, what is the likeness to which we can compare him? we would say, that the guilt of him who trafficked on the highway, or trafficked on that outraged coast, from whose weeping families children were inseparably torn, was far outmeasured by the guilt which could thus frustrate a father's fondest prayers, and trample under foot the hopes and the preparations of eternity.

There is another way whereby, in the employ of a careless and unprincipled master, it is impossible but that offences must come. You know just as well as we do, that there are chicaneries in business; and, so long as we forbear stating the precise extent of them, there is not an individual among you, who has a title to construe the assertion into an affronting charge of criminality against himself. But you surely

know, as well as we, that the mercantile profession, conducted, as it often is, with the purest integrity, and laying no resistless necessity whatever for the surrender of principle on any of its members; and dignified by some of the noblest exhibitions of untainted honour, and devoted friendship, and magnificent generosity, that have ever been recorded of our nature;—you know as well as we, that it was utterly extravagant, and in the face of all observation, to affirm, that each, and every one of its numerous competitors, stood clearly and totally exempted from the sins of an undue selfishness. And, accordingly, there are certain commodious falsehoods occasionally practised in this department of human affairs. There are, for example, certain dexterous and gainful evasions, whereby the payers of tribute are enabled, at times, to make their escape from the eagle eye of the exactors of tribute. There are even certain contests of ingenuity between individual traders, where, in the higgling of a very keen and anxious negociation, each of them is tempted, in talking of offers and prices, and the reports of fluctuations in home and foreign markets, to say the things

which are not. You must assuredly know, that these, and such as these, then, have introduced a certain quantity of what may be called shuffling, into the communications of the trading world—insomuch, that the simplicity of yea, yea, and nay, nay, is in some degree exploded; and there is a kind of understood toleration established for certain modes of expression, which could not, we are much afraid, stand the rigid scrutiny of the great day; and there is an abatement of confidence between man and man, implying, we doubt, such a proportionate abatement of truth, as goes to extend most fearfully the condemnation that is due to all liars, who shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. And who can compute the effect of all this on the young and yet unpractised observer? Who does not see, that it must go to reduce the tone of his principles; and to involve him in many a delicate struggle between the morality he has learned from his catechism, and the morality he sees in the counting-house; and to obliterate, in his mind, the distinctions between right and wrong; and, at length, to reconcile his

conscience to a sin which, like every other, deserves the wrath and the curse of God; and to make him tamper with a direct commandment, in such a way, as that falsehoods and frauds might be nothing more in his estimation, than the peccadilloes of an innocent compliance with the current practices and moralities of the world? Here, then, is a point, at which the way of those who conform to this world, diverges from the way of those peculiar people who are redeemed from all iniquity, and are thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Here is a grievous occasion to fall. Here is a competition between the service of God and the service of Mammon. Here is the exhibition of another offence, and the bringing forward of another temptation, to those who are entering on the business of the world, little adverted to, we fear, by those who live in utter carelessness of their own souls, and never spend a thought or a sigh about the immortality of others—but most distinctly singled out by the text as a crime of foremost magnitude in the eye of Him who judgeth righteously.

And before we quit the subject of such offences as take place in ordinary trade, let us just advert to one example of it—not so much for the frequency of its occurrence, as for the way that it stands connected in principle with a very general, and, we believe, a very mischievous offence, that takes place in domestic society. It is neither, you will observe, the avarice nor the selfishness of our nature, which forms the only obstruction in the way of one man dealing plainly with another. There is another obstruction, founded on a far more pleasing and amiable principle—even on that delicacy of feeling, in virtue of which, one man cannot bear to wound or to mortify another. It would require, for instance, a very rare, and, certainly, not a very enviable degree of hardihood, to tell another, without pain, that you did not think him worthy of being trusted. And yet, in the doings of merchandise, this is the very trial of delicacy which sometimes offers itself. The man with whom you stand committed to as great an extent as you count to be adviseable, would like, perhaps, to try your confidence in him, and his own credit with you, a little farther; and he comes back upon you with a fresh order;

and you secretly have no desire to link any more of your property with his speculation; and the difficulty is how to get the application in question disposed of; and you feel that by far the pleasantest way, to all the parties concerned, would be, to make him believe that you refuse the application not because you will not comply, but because you cannot—for that you have no more of the article he wants from you upon hand. And it would only be putting your own soul to hazard, did you personally and by yourself make this communication: but you select, perhaps, as the organ of it some agent or underling of your establishment, who knows it to be false; and to avoid the soreness of a personal encounter with the man whom you are to disappoint, you devolve the whole business of this lying apology upon others; and thus do you continue to shift this oppressive burden away from you—or, in other words, to save your own delicacy, you count not, and you care not, about another's damnation.

Now, what we call upon you to mark, is the perfect identity of principle between this case of making a brother to offend, and another case

which obtains, we have heard, to a very great extent among the most genteel and opulent of our city families. In this case, you put a lie into the mouth of a dependent, and that, for the purpose of protecting your substance from such an application as might expose it to hazard or diminution. In the second case, you put a lie into the mouth of a dependent, and that, for the purpose of protecting your time from such an encroachment as you would not feel to be convenient or agreeable. And, in both cases, you are led to hold out this offence by a certain delicacy of temperament, in virtue of which, you can neither give a man plainly to understand that you are not willing to trust him, nor can you give him to understand that you count his company to be an interruption. But, in both the one and the other example, look to the little account that is made of a brother's or of a sister's eternity; behold the guilty task that is thus unmercifully laid upon one who is shortly to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; think of the entanglement which is thus made to beset the path of a creature who is unperishable. That, at the shrine of Mammon, such a bloody sacrifice

should be rendered by some of his unrelenting votaries, is not to be wondered at; but that the shrine of elegance and fashion should be bathed in blood—that soft and sentimental ladyship should put forth her hand to such an enormity —that she who can sigh so gently, and shed her graceful tear over the sufferings of others, should thus be accessary to the second and more awful death of her own domestics—that one who looks the mildest and the loveliest of human beings, should exact obedience to a mandate which carries wrath, and tribulation, and anguish, in its train—O! how it should confirm every Christian in his defiance to the authority of fashion, and lead him to spurn at all its folly, and at all its worthlessness.

And it is quite in vain to say, that the servant whom you thus employ as the deputy of your falsehood, can possibly execute the commission without the conscience being at all tainted or defiled by it; that a simple cottage maid can so sophisticate the matter, as, without any violence to her original principles, to utter the language of what she assuredly knows to be a downright

lie; that she, humble and untutored soul, can sustain no injury when thus made to tamper with the plain English of these realms; that she can at all satisfy herself, how, by the prescribed utterance of "not at home," she is not pronouncing such words as are substantially untrue, but merely using them in another and perfectly understood meaning—and which, according to their modern translation, denote, that the person of whom she is thus speaking, instead of being away from home, is secretly lurking in one of the most secure and intimate of its receptacles. You may try to darken and transform this piece of casuistry as you will; and work up your own minds into the peaceable conviction that it is all right, and as it should be. But be very certain, that where the moral sense of your domestic is not already overthrown, there is, at least, one bosom within which you have raised a war of doubts and of difficulties; and where, if the victory be on your side, it will be on the side of him who is the great enemy of righteousness. There is, at least, one person along the line of this conveyance of deceit, who condemneth herself in that which she alloweth; who, in the language of Paul,

esteeming the practice to be unclean, to her will it be unclean; who will perform her task with the offence of her own conscience, and to whom, therefore, it will indeed be evil; who cannot render obedience in this matter to her earthly superior, but by an act, in which she does not stand clear and unconscious of guilt before God; and with whom, therefore, the sad consequence of what we can call nothing else than a barbarous combination against the principles and the prospects of the lower orders, is—that as she has not cleaved fully unto the Lord, and has not kept by the service of the one master, and has not forsaken all at His bidding, she cannot be the disciple of Christ.

The aphorism, that he who offendeth in one point is guilty of all, tells us something more than of the way in which God adjudges condemnation to the disobedient. It also tells us of the way in which one individual act of sinfulness operates upon our moral nature. It is altogether an erroneous view of the commandments, to look upon them as so many observances to which we are bound by as many distinct and independent

ties of obligation—insomuch, that the transgression of one of them may be brought about by the dissolution of one separate tie, and may leave all the others with as entire a constraining influence and authority as before. The truth is, that the commandments ought rather to be looked upon as branching out from one great and general tie of obligation; and that there is no such thing as loosening the hold of one of them upon the conscience, but by the unfastening of that tie which binds them all upon the conscience. So that if one member in the system of practical righteousness be made to suffer, all the other members suffer along with it; and if one decision of the moral sense be thwarted, the organ of the moral sense is permanently impaired, and a leaven of iniquity infused into all its other decisions; and if one suggestion of this inward monitor be stifled, a general shock is given to his authority over the whole man; and if one of the least commandments of the law is left unfulfilled, the law itself is brought down from its rightful ascendency; and thus it is, that one act of disobedience may be the commencement and the token of a systematic universal rebelliousness of the

heart against God. It is this which gives such a wide-wasting malignity to each of the separate offences on which we have now expatiated. It is this which so multiplies the means and the possibilities of corruption in the world. It is thus that, at every one point in the intercourse of human society, there may be struck out a fountain of poisonous emanation on all who approach it; and think not, therefore, that under each of the examples we have given, we were only contending for the preservation of one single feature in the character of him who stands exposed to this world's offences. We felt it, in fact, to be a contest for his eternity; and that the case involved in it his general condition with God; and that he who leads the young into a course of dissipation—or that he who tampers with their impressions of Sabbath sacredness—or that he who, either in the walks of business, or in the services of the family, makes them the agents of deceitfulness—or that he, in short, who tempts them to transgress in any one thing, has, in fact, poured such a pervading taint into their moral constitution, as to spoil or corrupt them in all things: and that thus, upon one solitary

occasion, or by the exhibition of one particular offence, a mischief may be done equivalent to the total destruction of a human soul, or to the blotting out of its prospects for immortality.

And let us just ask a master or a mistress, who can thus make free with the moral principle of their servants in one instance, how they can look for pure or correct principle from them in other instances? What right have they to complain of unfaithfulness against themselves, who have deliberately seduced another into a habit of unfaithfulness against God? Are they so utterly unskilled in the mysteries of our nature, as not to perceive, that if a man gather hardihood enough to break the Sabbath in opposition to his own conscience, this very hardihood will avail him to the breaking of other obligations?—that he whom, for their advantage, they have so exercised, as to fill his conscience with offence towards his God, will not scruple, for his own advantage, so to exercise himself, as to fill his conscience with offence towards his master?—that the servant whom you have taught to lie, has gotten such rudiments of education at your hand, as that,

without any further help, he can now teach himself to purloin?—and yet nothing more frequent than loud and angry complainings against the treachery of servants; as if, in the general wreck of their other principles, a principle of consideration for the good and interest of their employer—and who, at the same time, has been their seducer—was to survive in all its power, and all its sensibility. It is just such a retribution as was to be looked for. It is a recoil upon their own heads of the mischief which they themselves have originated. It is the temporal part of the punishment which they have to bear for the sin of our text, but not the whole of it; for better for them that both person and property were cast into the sea, than that they should stand the reckoning of that day, when called to give an account of the souls that they have murdered, and the blood of so mighty a destruction is required at their hands.

The evil against which we have just protested, is an outrage of far greater enormity than tyrant or oppressor can inflict, in the prosecution of his worst designs against the political rights and

liberties of the commonwealth. The very semblance of such designs will summon every patriot to his post of observation; and, from a thousand watch-towers of alarm, will the outcry of freedom in danger be heard throughout the land. But there is a conspiracy of a far more malignant influence upon the destinies of the species that is now going on; and which seems to call forth no indignant spirit, and to bring no generous exclamation along with it. Throughout all the recesses of private and domestic history, there is an ascendency of rank and station against which no stern republican is ever heard to lift his voice —though it be an ascendency, so exercised, as to be of most noxious operation to the dearest hopes and best interests of humanity. There is a cruel combination of the great against the majesty of the people—we mean the majesty of the people's worth. There is a haughty unconcern about an inheritance, which, by an unalienable right, should be theirs—we mean their future and everlasting inheritance. There is a deadly invasion made on their rights—we mean their rights of conscience; and, in this our land of boasted privileges, are the low trampled upon by

the high—we mean trampled into all the degradation of guilt and of worthlessness. They are utterly bereft of that homage which ought to be rendered to the dignity of their immortal nature; and to minister to the avarice of an imperious master, or to spare the sickly delicacy of the fashionables in our land, are the truth and the piety of our population, and all the virtues of their eternity, most unfeelingly plucked away from them. It belongs to others to fight the battle of their privileges in time. But who that looks with a calculating eye on their duration that never ends, can repress an alarm of a higher order? It belongs to others generously to struggle for the place and the adjustment of the lower orders in the great vessel of the state. But, surely, the question of their place in eternity is of mightier concern than how they are to sit and be accommodated in that pathway vehicle which takes them to their everlasting habitations.

Christianity is, in one sense, the greatest of all levellers. It looks to the elements, and not to the circumstantials of humanity; and regarding as altogether superficial and temporary the dis-

tinctions of this fleeting pilgrimage, it fastens on those points of assimilation which liken the king upon the throne to the very humblest of his subject population. They are alike in the nakedness of their birth. They are alike in the sureness of their decay. They are alike in the agonies of their dissolution. And after the one is tombed in sepulchral magnificence, and the other is laid in his sod-wrapt grave, are they most fearfully alike in the corruption to which they moulder. But it is with the immortal nature of each that Christianity has to do; and, in both the one and the other, does it behold a nature alike forfeited by guilt, and alike capable of being restored by the grace of an offered salvation. And never do the pomp and the circumstance of externals appear more humiliating, than when, looking onwards to the day of resurrection, we behold the sovereign standing without his crown, and trembling, with the subject by his side, at the bar of heaven's majesty. There the master and the servant will be brought to their reckoning together; and when the one is tried upon the guilt and the malignant influence of his Sabbath companies—and is charged with the

profane and careless habit of his household establishment—and is reminded how he kept both himself and his domestics from the solemn ordinance—and is made to perceive the fearful extent of the moral and spiritual mischief which he has wrought as the irreligious head of an irreligious family—and how, among other things, he, under a system of fashionable hypocrisy, so tampered with another's principles as to defile his conscience, and to destroy him—O! how tremendously will the little brief authority in which he now plays his fantastic tricks, turn to his own condemnation; for, than thus abuse his authority, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.

And how comes it, we ask, that any master is armed with a power so destructive over the immortals who are around him? God has given him no such power. The state has not given it to him. There is no law, either human or divine, by which he can enforce any order upon his servants to an act of falsehood, or to an act of impiety. Should any such act of authority be

attempted on the part of the master, it should be followed up on the part of the servant by an act of disobedience. Should your master or mistress bid you say not at home, when you know that they are at home, it is your duty to refuse compliance with such an order: and if it be asked, how can this matter be adjusted after such a violent and alarming innovation on the laws of fashionable intercourse, we answer, just by the simple substitution of truth for falsehood—just by prescribing the utterance of, engaged, which is a fact, instead of the utterance of, not at home, which is a lie—just by holding the principles of your servant to be of higher account than the false delicacies of your acquaintance—just by a bold and vigorous recurrence to the simplicity of nature—just by determinedly doing what is right, though the example of a whole host were against you; and by giving impulse to the current of example, when it happens to be moving in a proper direction. And here we are happy to say that fashion has of late been making a capricious and accidental movement on the side of principle—and to be blunt, and open, and manly, is now on the fair

way to be fashionable—and a temper of homelier quality is beginning to infuse itself into the luxuriousness, and the effeminacy, and the palling and excessive complaisance of genteel society—and the staple of cultivated manners is improving in firmness, and frankness, and honesty, and may, at length, by the aid of a principle of Christian rectitude, be so interwoven with the cardinal virtues, as to present a different texture altogether from the soft and the silken degeneracy of modern days.

And that we may not appear the champions of an insurrection against the authority of masters, let us further say, that while it is the duty of clerk or apprentice to refuse the doing of week-day work on the Sabbath, and while it is the duty of servants to refuse the utterance of a prescribed falsehood, and while it is the duty of every dependent, in the service of his master, to serve him only in the Lord—yet this very principle, tending as it may to a rare and occasional act of disobedience, is also the principle which renders every servant who adheres to it a perfect treasure of fidelity, and attach-

ment, and general obedience. This is the way in which to obtain a credit for his refusal, and to stamp upon it a noble consistency. In this way he will, even to the mind of an ungodly master, make up for all his particularities: and should he be what, if a Christian, he will be; should he be, at all times, the most alert in service, and the most patient of provocation, and the most cordial in affection, and the most scrupulously honest in the charge and custody of all that is committed to him—then let the post of drudgery at which he toils be humble as it may, the contrast between the meanness of his office and the dignity of his character will only heighten the reverence that is due to principle, and make it more illustrious. His scruples may, at first, be the topics of displeasure, and afterwards the topics of occasional levity; but, in spite of himself, will his employer be at length constrained to look upon them with respectful toleration. The servant will be to the master a living epistle of Christ, and he may read there what he has not yet perceived in the letter of the New Testament. He may read, in the person of his own domestic, the power and the

truth of Christianity. He may positively stand in awe of his own hired servant—and, regarding his bosom as a sanctuary of worth which it were monstrous to violate, will he feel, when tempted to offer one command of impiety, that he cannot, that he dare not.

And, before we conclude, let us, if possible, try to rebuke the wealthy out of their unfeeling indifference to the souls of the poor, by the example of the Saviour. Let those who look on the immortality of the poor as beneath their concern, only look unto Christ—to him who, for the sake of the poorest of us all, became poor himself, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich. Let them think how the principle of all these offences which we have been attempting to expose, is in the direct face of that principle which prompted, at first, and which still presides over, the whole of the gospel dispensation. Let them learn a higher reverence for the eternity of those beneath them, by thinking of him, who, to purchase an inheritance for the poor, and to provide them with the blessings of a preached gospel, unrobed him of all his great-

ness; and descended himself to the lot and the labours of poverty; and toiled, to the beginning of his public ministry, at the work of a carpenter; and submitted to all the horrors of a death which was aggravated by the burden of a world's atonement, and made inconceivably severe, by there being infused into it all the bitterness of the cup of expiation. Think, O think, when some petty design of avarice or vanity would lead you to forget the imperishable souls of those who are beneath you, that you are setting yourselves in diametric opposition to that which lieth nearest to the heart of the Saviour; that you are countervailing the whole tendency of his redemption; that you are thwarting the very object of that enterprise for which all heaven is represented as in motion—and angels are with wonder looking on—and God the Father laid an appointment on the Son of his love—and he, the august personage in whom the magnificent train of prophecy, from the beginning of the world, has its theme and its fulfilment, at length came amongst us, in shrouded majesty, and was led to the cross, like a lamb for the slaughter, and bowed his head in agony, and gave up the ghost.

And here let us address one word more to the masters and mistresses of families. By adopting the reformations to which we have been urging you, you may do good to the cause of Christianity, and yet not advance, by a single hair-breadth, the Christianity of your own souls. It is not by this one reformation, or, indeed, by any given number of reformations, that you are saved. It is by believing in Christ that men are saved. You may escape, it is sure, a higher degree of punishment, but you will not escape damnation. You may do good to the souls of your servants, by a rigid observance of the lesson of this day. But we seek the good of your own souls, also, and we pronounce upon them that they are in a state of death, till one great act be performed, and one act, too, which does not consist of any number of particular acts, or particular reformations. What shall I do to be saved? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. And he who believeth not, the wrath of God abideth on him. Do this, if you want to make the great and important transition for yourselves. Do this, if you want your own name to be blotted out of the book

of condemnation. If you seek to have your own persons justified before God, submit to the righteousness of God—even that righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, and is unto all and upon all who believe. This is the turning point of your acceptance with the Lawgiver. And at this step, also, in the history of your souls, will there be applied to you a power of motive, and will you be endowed with an obedient sensibility to the influence of motive, which will make it the turning point of a new heart and a new character. The particular reformation that we have now been urging will be one of a crowd of other reformations; and, in the spirit of him who pleased not himself, but gave up his life for others, will you forego all the desires of selfishness and vanity, and look not merely to your own things, but also to the things of others.

DISCOURSE VIII.

ON THE LOVE OF MONEY.

"If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence; if I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because mine hand had gotten much; if I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness; and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand; this also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge; for I should have denied the God that is above."—JOB xxxi. 24—28.

WHAT is worthy of remark in this passage is, that a certain affection, only known among the votaries of Paganism, should be classed under the same character and have the same condemnation with an affection, not only known, but allowed, nay cherished into habitual supremacy, all over Christendom. How universal is it among those who are in pursuit of wealth, to make gold their hope, and, among those who are in possession of wealth, to make fine gold their confidence! Yet

we are here told that this is virtually as complete a renunciation of God as to practise some of the worst charms of idolatry. And it might perhaps serve to unsettle the vanity of those who, unsuspicious of the disease that is in their hearts, are wholly given over to this world, and wholly without alarm in their anticipations of another,—could we convince them that the most reigning and resistless desire by which they are actuated, stamps the same perversity on them, in the sight of God, as he sees to be in those who are worshippers of the sun in the firmament, or are offering incense to the moon, as the queen of heaven.

We recoil from an idolater, as from one who labours under a great moral derangement, in suffering his regards to be carried away from the true God to an idol. But, is it not just the same derangement, on the part of man, that he should love any created good, and in the enjoyment of it lose sight of the Creator—that he should delight himself with the use and the possession of a gift, and be unaffected by the circumstance of its having been put into his hands

by a giver—that, thoroughly absorbed with the present and the sensible gratification, there should be no room left for the movements of duty or regard to the Being who furnished him with the materials, and endowed him with the organs, of every gratification,—that he should thus lavish all his desires on the surrounding materialism, and fetch from it all his delights, while the thought of him who formed it is habitually absent from his heart—that, in the play of those attractions that subsist between him and the various objects in the neighbourhood of his person, there should be the same want of reference to God, as there is in the play of those attractions which subsist between a piece of unconscious matter and the other matter that is around it—that all the influences which operate upon the human will should emanate from so many various points in the mechanism of what is formed, but that no practical or ascendant influence should come down upon it from the presiding and the preserving Deity? Why, if such be man, he could not be otherwise, though there were no Deity. The part he sustains in the world is the very same that it would have

been, had the world sprung into being of itself, or without an originating mind had maintained its being from eternity. He just puts forth the evolutions of his own nature, as one of the component individuals in a vast independent system of nature, made up of many parts and many individuals. In hungering for what is agreeable to his senses, or recoiling from what is bitter or unsuitable to them, he does so without thinking of God, or borrowing any impulse to his own will from any thing he knows or believes to be the will of God. Religion has just as little to do with those daily movements of his which are voluntary, as it has to do with the growth of his body, which is involuntary; or, as it has to do, in other words, with the progress and the phenomena of vegetation. With a mind that ought to know God, and a conscience that ought to award to him the supreme jurisdiction, he lives as effectually without him, as if he had no mind and no conscience; and, bating a few transient visitations of thought, and a few regularities of outward and mechanical observation, do we behold man running, and willing, and preparing, and enjoying, just as if there was no other por-

tion than the creature—just as if the world, and its visible elements, formed the all with which he had to do.

I wish to impress upon you the distinction that there is between the love of money, and the love of what money purchases. Either of these affections may equally displace God from the heart. But there is a malignity and an inveteracy of atheism in the former which does not belong to the latter, and in virtue of which it may be seen that the love of money is, indeed, the root of all evil.

When we indulge the love of that which is purchased by money, the materials of gratification, and the organs of gratification are present with each other—just as in the enjoyments of the inferior animals, and just as in all the simple and immediate enjoyments of man; such as the tasting of food, or the smelling of a flower. There is an adaptation of the senses to certain external objects, and there is a pleasure arising out of that adaptation, and it is a pleasure which may be felt by man, along

with a right and a full infusion of godliness. The primitive Christians, for example, ate their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God. But, in the case of every unconverted man, the pleasure has no such accompaniment. He carries in his heart no recognition of that hand, by the opening of which it is, that the means and the materials of enjoyment are placed within his reach. The matter of the enjoyment is all with which he is conversant. The Author of the enjoyment is unheeded. The avidity with which he rushes onward to any of the direct gratifications of nature bears a resemblance to the avidity with which one of the lower creation rushes to its food, or to its water, or to the open field, where it gambols in all the wantonness of freedom, and finds a high-breathed joy in the very strength and velocity of its movements. And the atheism of the former, who has a mind for the sense and knowledge of his Creator, is often as entire as the atheism of the latter, who has it not. Man, who ought to look to the primary cause of all his blessings, because he is capable of seeing thus far, is often as blind to God, in the midst of enjoyment, as

the animal who is not capable of seeing him. He can trace the stream to its fountain; but still he drinks of the stream with as much greediness of pleasure, and as little recognition of its source, as the animal beneath him. In other words, his atheism, while tasting the bounties of Providence, is just as complete, as is the atheism of the inferior animals. But theirs proceeds from their incapacity of knowing God. His proceeds from his not liking to retain God in his knowledge. He may come under the power of godliness, if he would. But he chooses rather that the power of sensuality should lord it over him, and his whole man is engrossed with the objects of sensuality.

But a man differs from an animal in being something more than a sensitive being. He is also a reflective being. He has the power of thought, and inference, and anticipation, to signalise him above the beasts of the field, or of the forest; and yet will it be found, in the case of every natural man, that the exercise of those powers, so far from having carried him nearer, has only widened his departure from God, and

given a more deliberate and wilful character to his atheism, than if he had been without them altogether.

In virtue of the powers of mind which belong to him, he can carry his thoughts beyond the present desires and the present gratification. He can calculate on the visitations of future desire, and on the means of its gratification. He cannot only follow out the impulse of hunger that is now upon him; he can look onwards to the successive and recurring impulses of hunger which await him, and he can devise expedients for relieving it. Out of that great stream of supply, which comes direct from Heaven to earth, for the sustenance of all its living generations, he can draw off and appropriate a separate rill of conveyance, and direct it into a reservoir for himself. He can enlarge the capacity, or he can strengthen the embankments of this reservoir. By doing the one, he augments his proportion of this common tide of wealth which circulates through the world, and by doing the other, he augments his security for holding it in perpetual possession. The animal who drinks

out of the stream thinks not whence it issues. But man thinks of the reservoir which yields to him his portion of it. And he looks no further. He thinks not that to fill it, there must be a great and original fountain, out of which there issueth a mighty flood of abundance for the purpose of distribution among all the tribes and families of the world. He stops short at the secondary and artificial fabric which he himself hath formed, and out of which, as from a spring, he draws his own peculiar enjoyments; and never thinks either of his own peculiar supply fluctuating with the variations of the primary spring, or of connecting these variations with the will of the great but unseen director of all things. It is true, that if this main and originating fountain be, at any time, less copious in its emission, he will have less to draw from it to his own reservoir; and in that very proportion will his share of the bounties of Providence be reduced. But still it is to the well, or receptacle, of his own striking out that he looks, as his main security for the relief of nature's wants, and the abundant supply of nature's enjoyments. It is upon his own work that he depends

in this matter, and not on the work or the will of him who is the Author of nature; who giveth rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, and filleth every heart with food and gladness. And thus it is that the reason of man, and the retrospective power of man, still fail to carry him, by an ascending process, to the First Cause. He stops at the instrumental cause, which, by his own wisdom and his own power, he has put into operation. In a word, the man's understanding is over-run with atheism, as well as his desires. The intellectual as well as the sensitive part of his constitution seems to be infected with it. When, like the instinctive and unreflecting animal, he engages in the act of direct enjoyment, he is like it, too, in its atheism. When he rises above the animal, and, in the exercise of his higher and larger faculties, he engages in the act of providing for enjoyment, he still carries his atheism along with him.

A sum of money is, in all its functions, equivalent to such a reservoir. Take one year with another, and the annual consumption of the world cannot exceed the annual produce which

issues from the storehouse of him who is the great and the bountiful Provider of all its families. The money that is in any man's possession represents the share which he can appropriate to himself of this produce. If it be a large sum, it is like a capacious reservoir on the bank of the river of abundance. If it be laid out on firm and stable securities, still it is like a firmly embanked reservoir. The man who toils to increase his money is like a man who toils to enlarge the capacity of his reservoir. The man who suspects a flaw in his securities, or who apprehends, in the report of failures and fluctuations, that his money is all to flow away from him, is like a man who apprehends a flaw in the embankments of his reservoir. Meanwhile, in all the care that is thus expended, either on the money or on the magazine, the originating source, out of which there is imparted to the one all its real worth, or there is imparted to the other all its real fulness, is scarcely ever thought of. Let God turn the earth into a barren desert, and the money ceases to be convertible to any purpose of enjoyment; or let him lock up that magazine of great and general supply, out of which

he showers abundance among our habitations, and all the subordinate magazines formed beside the wonted stream of liberality, would remain empty. But all this is forgotten by the vast majority of our unthoughtful and unreflecting species. The patience of God is still unexhausted; and the seasons still roll in kindly succession over the heads of an ungrateful generation; and that period, when the machinery of our present system shall stop and be taken to pieces has not yet arrived; and that Spirit, who will not always strive with the children of men, is still prolonging his experiment on the powers and the perversities of our moral nature; and still suspending the edict of dissolution, by which this earth and these heavens are at length to pass away. So that the sun still shines upon us; and the clouds still drop upon us; and the earth still puts forth the bloom and the beauty of its luxuriance; and all the ministers of heaven's liberality still walk their annual round, and scatter plenty over the face of an alienated world; and the whole of nature continues as smiling in promise, and as sure in fulfilment, as in the days of our forefathers; and out of her large and

universal granary is there, in every returning year, as rich a conveyance of aliment as before, to the populous family in whose behalf it is opened. But it is the business of many among that population, each to erect his own separate granary, and to replenish it out of the general store, and to feed himself and his dependents out of it. And he is right in so doing. But he is not right in looking to his own peculiar receptacle, as if it were the first and the emanating fountain of all his enjoyments. He is not right in thus idolising the work of his own hands—awarding no glory and no confidence to him in whose hands is the key of that great storehouse, out of which every lesser storehouse of man derives its fulness. He is not right, in labouring after the money which purchaseth all things, to avert the earnestness of his regards from the Being who provides all things. He is not right, in thus building his security on that which is subordinate, unheeding and unmindful of him who is supreme. It is not right, that silver and gold, though unshaped into statuary, should still be doing, in this enlightened land, what the images of Paganism once did. It is not right, that

they should thus supplant the deference which is owing to the God and the governor of all things—or that each man amongst us should, in the secret homage of trust and satisfaction which he renders to his bills, and his deposits, and his deeds of property and possession, endow these various articles with the same moral ascendency over his heart, as the household gods of antiquity had over the idolaters of antiquity—making them as effectually usurp the place of the divinity, and dethrone the one Monarch of heaven and earth from that pre-eminence of trust and of affection that belongs to him.

He who makes a god of his pleasure, renders to this idol the homage of his senses. He who makes a god of his wealth, renders to this idol the homage of his mind; and he, therefore, of the two, is the more hopeless and determined idolater. The former is goaded on to his idolatry, by the power of appetite. The latter cultivates his with wilful and deliberate perseverance; consecrates his very highest powers to its service; embarks in it, not with the heat of passion, but, with the coolness of steady and calculating prin-

ciple; fully gives up his reason and his time, and all the faculties of his understanding, as well as all the desires of his heart, to the great object of a fortune in this world; makes the acquirement of gain the settled aim, and the prosecution of that aim the settled habit of his existence; sits the whole day long at the post of his ardent and unremitting devotions; and, as he labours at the desk of his counting-house, has his soul just as effectually seduced from the living God to an object distinct from him, and contrary to him, as if the ledger over which he was bending was a book of mystical characters, written in honour of some golden idol placed before him, and with a view to render this idol propitious to himself and to his family. Baal and Moloch were not more substantially the gods of rebellious Israel, than Mammon is the god of all his affections. To the fortune he has reared, or is rearing, for himself and his descendents, he ascribes all the power and all the independence of a divinity. With the wealth he has gotten by his own hands, does he feel himself as independent of God, as the Pagan does, who, happy in the fancied protection of an image

made with his own hand, suffers no disturbance to his quiet, from any thought of the real but the unknown Deity. His confidence is in his treasure, and not in God. It is there that he places all his safety and all his sufficiency. It is not on the Supreme Being, conceived in the light of a real and a personal agent, that he places his dependence. It is on a mute and material statue of his own erection. It is wealth which stands to him in the place of God—to which he awards the credit of all his enjoyments—which he looks to as the emanating fountain of all his present sufficiency—from which he gathers his fondest expectations of all the bright and fancied blessedness that is yet before him—on which he rests as the firmest and stablest foundation of all that the heart can wish, or the eye can long after, both for himself and for his children. It matters not to him, that all his enjoyment comes from a primary fountain, and that his wealth is only an intermediate reservoir. It matters not to him, that, if God were to set a seal upon the door of the upper storehouse in heaven, or to blast and to burn up all the fruitfulness of earth, he would reduce, to the worthlessness of dross,

all the silver and the gold that abound in it. Still the gold and the silver are his gods. His own fountain is between him and the fountain of original supply. His wealth is between him and God. Its various lodging-places, whether in the bank, or in the place of registration, or in the depository of wills and title-deeds—these are the sanctuaries of his secret worship—these are the high-places of his adoration; and never did devout Israelite look with more intentness towards Mount Zion, and with his face towards Jerusalem, than he does to his wealth, as to the mountain and stronghold of his security. Nor could the Supreme be more effectually deposed from the homage of trust and gratitude than he actually is, though this wealth were recalled from its various investments; and turned into one mass of gold; and cast into a piece of molten statuary; and enshrined on a pedestal, around which all his household might assemble, and make it the object of their family devotions; and plied every hour of every day with all the fooleries of a senseless and degrading Paganism. It is thus, that God may keep up the charge of idolatry against us, even after

all its images have been overthrown. It is thus that dissuasives from idolatry are still addressed, in the New Testament, to the pupils of a new and better dispensation; that little children are warned against idols; and all of us are warned to flee from covetousness, which is idolatry.

To look no further than to fortune as the dispenser of all the enjoyments which money can purchase, is to make that fortune stand in the place of God. It is to make sense shut out faith, and to rob the King eternal and invisible of that supremacy, to which all the blessings of human existence, and all the varieties of human condition, ought, in every instance, and in every particular, to be referred. But, as we have already remarked, the love of money is one affection, and the love of what is purchased by money is another. It was, at first, we have no doubt, loved for the sake of the good things which it enabled its possessor to acquire. But whether, as the result of associations in the mind so rapid as to escape the notice of our own consciousness—or as the fruit of an infection running by sympathy among all men busily

engaged in the prosecution of wealth, as the supreme good of their being—certain it is, that money, originally pursued for the sake of other things, comes at length to be prized for its own sake. And, perhaps, there is no one circumstance which serves more to liken the love of money to the most irrational of the heathen idolatries, than that it at length passes into the love of money for itself; and acquires a most enduring power over the human affections, separately altogether from the power of purchase and of command which belongs to it, over the proper and original objects of human desire. The first thing which set man agoing in the pursuit of wealth, was that, through it, as an intervening medium, he found his way to other enjoyments; and it proves him, as we have observed, capable of a higher reach of anticipation than the beasts of the field, or the fowls of the air, that he is thus able to calculate, and to foresee, and to build up a provision for the wants of futurity. But, mark how soon this boasted distinction of his faculties is overthrown, and how near to each other lie the dignity and the debasement of the human understanding. If it evinced a

loftier mind in man than in the inferior animals, that he invented money, and by the acquisition of it can both secure abundance for himself, and transmit this abundance to the future generations of his family—what have we to offer, in vindication of this intellectual eminence, when we witness how soon it is, that the pursuit of wealth ceases to be rational?—How, instead of being prosecuted as an instrument, either for the purchase of ease, or the purchase of enjoyment, both the ease and enjoyment of a whole life are rendered up as sacrifices at its shrine?—How, from being sought after as a minister of gratification to the appetites of nature, it at length brings nature into bondage, and robs her of all her simple delights, and pours the infusion of wormwood into the currency of her feelings?—making that man sad who ought to be cheerful, and that man who ought to rejoice in his present abundance, filling him either with the cares of an ambition which never will be satisfied, or with the apprehensions of a distress which, in all its pictured and exaggerated evils, will never be realised. And it is wonderful, it is passing wonderful, that wealth, which derives all that

is true and sterling in its worth from its subserviency to other advantages, should, apart from all thought about this subserviency, be made the object of such fervent and fatiguing devotion. Insomuch, that never did Indian devotee inflict upon himself a severer agony at the footstool of his Paganism, than those devotees of wealth who, for its acquirement as their ultimate object, will forego all the uses for which alone it is valuable—will give up all that is genuine or tranquil in the pleasures of life; and will pierce themselves through with many sorrows; and will undergo all the fiercer tortures of the mind; and, instead of employing what they have, to smooth their passage through the world, will, upon the hazardous sea of adventure, turn the whole of this passage into a storm—thus exalting wealth, from a servant unto a lord, who, in return for the homage that he obtains from his worshippers, exercises them, like Rehoboam his subjects of old, not with whips but with scorpions—with consuming anxiety, with never-sated desire, with brooding apprehension, and its frequent and ever-flitting spectres, and the endless jealousies of competition

with men as intently devoted, and as emulous of a high place in the temple of their common idolatry, as themselves. And, without going to the higher exhibitions of this propensity, in all its rage and in all its restlessness, we have only to mark its workings on the walk of even and every-day citizenship; and there see, how, in the hearts even of its most common-place votaries, wealth is followed after, for its own sake; how, unassociated with all for which reason pronounces it to be of estimation, but, in virtue of some mysterious and undefinable charm, operating not on any principle of the judgement, but on the utter perversity of judgement, money has come to be of higher account than all that is purchased by money, and has attained a rank co-ordinate with that which our Saviour assigns to the life and to the body of man, in being reckoned more than meat and more than raiment. Thus making that which is subordinate to be primary, and that which is primary subordinate; transferring, by a kind of fascination, the affections away from wealth in use, to wealth in idle and unemployed possession,—insomuch, that the most welcome intelligence you could give

to the proprietor of many a snug deposit, in some place of secure and progressive accumulation, would be, that he should never require any part either of it or of its accumulation back again for the purpose of expenditure—and that, to the end of his life, every new year should witness another unimpaired addition to the bulk or the aggrandisement of his idol. And it would just heighten his enjoyment, could he be told, with prophetic certainty, that this process of undisturbed augmentation would go on with his children's children, to the last age of the world; that the economy of each succeeding race of descendants would leave the sum with its interest untouched, and the place of its sanctuary unviolated; and, that through a series of indefinite generations, would the magnitude ever grow, and the lustre ever brighten, of that household god, which he had erected for his own senseless adoration, and bequeathed as an object of as senseless adoration to his family.

We have the authority of that word which has been pronounced a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, that it cannot have two

masters, or that there is not room in it for two great and ascendant affections. The engrossing power of one such affection is expressly affirmed of the love for Mammon, or the love for money thus named and characterised as an idol. Or, in other words, if the love of money be in the heart, the love of God is not there. If a man be trusting in uncertain riches, he is not trusting in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy. If his heart be set upon covetousness, it is set upon an object of idolatry. The true divinity is moved away from his place, and, worse than atheism, which would only leave it empty, has the love of wealth raised another divinity upon his throne. So that covetousness offers a more daring and positive aggression on the right and territory of the Godhead, than even infidelity. The latter would only desolate the sanctuary of heaven; the former would set up an abomination in the midst of it. It not only strips God of love and of confidence, which are his prerogatives, but it transfers them to another. And little does the man who is proud in honour, but, at the same time, proud and peering in ambition—little does

he think, that, though acquitted in the eye of all his fellows, there still remains an atrocity of a deeper character than even that of atheism, with which he is chargeable. Let him just take an account of his mind, amid the labours of his merchandise, and he will find that the living God has no ascendency there; but that wealth just as much as if personified into life, and agency, and power, wields over him all the ascendency of God. Where his treasure is, his heart is also; and, linking as he does his main hope with its increase, and his main fear with its fluctuations and its failures, he has as effectually dethroned the Supreme from his heart, and deified an usurper in his room, as if fortune had been embodied into a goddess, and he were in the habit of repairing, with a crowd of other worshippers, to her temple. She, in fact, is the dispenser of that which he chiefly prizes in existence. A smile from her is worth all the promises of the Eternal, and her threatening frown more dreadful to the imagination than all his terrors.

And the disease is as near to universal as it is virulent. Wealth is the goddess whom all the

world worshippeth. There is many a city in our empire, of which, with an eye of apostolical discernment, it may be seen, that it is almost wholly given over to idolatry. If a man look no higher than to his money for his enjoyments, then money is his god. It is the god of his dependence, and the god upon whom his heart is staid. Or if, apart from other enjoyments, it, by some magical power of its own, has gotten the ascendency, then still it is followed after as the supreme good; and there is an actual supplanting of the living God. He is robbed of the gratitude that we owe him for our daily sustenance; for, instead of receiving it as if it came direct out of his hand, we receive it as if it came from the hand of a secondary agent, to whom we ascribe all the stability and independence of God. This wealth, in fact, obscures to us the character of God, as the real though unseen Author of our various blessings; and as if by a material intervention, does it hide from the perception of nature, the hand which feeds, and clothes, and maintains us in life, and in all the comforts and necessaries of life. It just has the effect of thickening still more that impal-

pable veil which lies between God and the eye of the senses. We lose all discernment of him as the giver of our comforts; and coming, as they appear to do, from that wealth which our fancies have raised into a living personification, does this idol stand before us, not as a deputy but as a substitute for that Being, with whom it is that we really have to do. All this goes both to widen and to fortify that disruption which has taken place between God and the world. It adds the power of one great master idol to the seducing influence of all the lesser idolatries. When the liking and the confidence of men are towards money, there is no direct intercourse, either by the one or the other of these affections towards God; and, in proportion as he sends forth his desires, and rests his security on the former, in that very proportion does he renounce God as his hope, and God as his dependence.

And to advert, for one moment, to the misery of this affection, as well as to its sinfulness. He, over whom it reigns, feels a worthlessness in his present wealth, after it is gotten; and

when to this we add the restlessness of a yet unsated appetite, lording it over all his convictions, and panting for more; when, to the dulness of his actual satisfaction in all the riches that he has, we add his still unquenched, and, indeed, unquenchable desire for the riches that he has not; when we reflect that as, in the pursuit of wealth, he widens the circle of his operation, so he lengthens out the line of his open and hazardous exposure, and multiplies, along the extent of it, those vulnerable points from which another and another dart of anxiety may enter into his heart; when he feels himself as if floating on an ocean of contingency, on which, perhaps, he is only borne up by the breath of a credit that is fictitious, and which, liable to burst every moment, may leave him to sink under the weight of his overladen speculation; when, suspended on the doubtful result of his bold and uncertain adventure, he dreads the tidings of disaster in every arrival, and lives in a continual agony of feeling, kept up by the crowd and turmoil of his manifold distractions, and so overspreading the whole compass of his thoughts, as to leave not one narrow space for

the thought of eternity;—will any beholder just look to the mind of this unhappy man, thus tost and bewildered, and thrown into a general unceasing frenzy, made out of many fears and many agitations, and not say, that the bird of the air which sends forth its unreflecting song, and lives on the fortuitous bounty of Providence, is not higher in the scale of enjoyment than he? And how much more, then, the quiet Christian beside him, who, in possession of food and raiment, has that godliness with contentment which is great gain—who, with the peace of heaven in his heart, and the glories of heaven in his eye, has found out the true philosophy of existence; has sought a portion where alone a portion can be found, and, in bidding away from his mind the love of money, has bidden away all the cross and all the carefulness along with it.

Death will soon break up every swelling enterprise of ambition, and put upon it a most cruel and degrading mockery. And it is, indeed, an affecting sight, to behold the workings of this world's infatuation among so many of our

fellow mortals nearing and nearing every day to eternity, and yet, instead of taking heed to that which is before them, mistaking their temporary vehicle for their abiding home—and spending all their time and all their thought upon its accommodations. It is all the doing of our great adversary, thus to invest the trifles of a day in such characters of greatness and durability; and it is, indeed, one of the most formidable of his wiles. And whatever may be the instrument of reclaiming men from this delusion, it certainly is not any argument either about the shortness of life, or the certainty and awfulness of its approaching termination. On this point man is capable of a stout-hearted resistance, even to ocular demonstration; nor do we know a more striking evidence of the bereavement which must have passed upon the human faculties, than to see how, in despite of arithmetic,—how, in despite of manifold experience—how, in despite of all his gathering wrinkles, and all his growing infirmities—how, in despite of the ever-lessening distance between him and his sepulchre, and of all the tokens of preparation for the onset of the last messenger, with which, in the

shape of weakness, and breathlessness, and dimness of eyes, he is visited; will the feeble and asthmatic man still shake his silver locks in all the glee and transport of which he is capable, when he hears of his gainful adventures, and his new accumulations. Nor can we tell how near he must get to his grave, or how far on he must advance in the process of dying, ere gain cease to delight, and the idol of wealth cease to be dear to him. But when we see that the topic is trade and its profits, which lights up his faded eye with the glow of its chiefest ecstacy, we are as much satisfied that he leaves the world with all his treasure there, and all the desires of his heart there, as if, acting what is told of the miser's death-bed, he made his bills and his parchments of security the companions of his bosom, and the last movements of his life were a fearful, tenacious, determined grasp, of what to him formed the all for which life was valuable.

THE END.