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*With the Author's Regards.*

POPERY,  
THE RELIGION OF MAN,  
NOT OF  
GOD, OR HIS WORD;  
A Lecture,

DELIVERED AT BANBURY, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 6, 1838,

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BY THE

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"By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift  
of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." EPHES. ii. 8, 9.

"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Rom. x. 17.

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TO THE  
**FRIENDS OF RELIGION,**

ASSEMBLED IN THE NATIONAL SCHOOL ROOM, BANBURY,

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 6, 1838,

**This Lecture,**

DELIVERED TO THEM, AND PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY THEIR FAITHFUL SERVANT,

**THE AUTHOR.**



## A LECTURE.

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It has been observed by Professor SMYTHE, of the University of Cambridge, in his admirable lectures on Modern History, which have been so repeatedly delivered in that seat of learning, for the instruction of its members, and which have proved so eminently useful in imbuing that body with enlightened views;—it has been observed, I say, by him, “that men seldom meet to discuss religious topics, without becoming bigoted and intolerant.” Such a judgment is but too well founded, and proved by experience. All history of the past, with but one solitary and glorious exception, that of the Author and Finisher of the Christian faith, bears testimony to the truth of the charge; and delivers in, respecting it, a verdict of guilty. Even the very exception we have noticed attests the justice of the condemnation, since it shews to us, that it required an incarnate manifestation of the Divine Being himself, in whom all the fulness of the Godhead should be visible, even through the veil of his human tabernacle, to exemplify and illustrate a spirit, which is and can be alone of God, and which teaches man to have compassion and tenderness for the errors and trespassings of his fellows, even as the Almighty has had like compassion upon him.

If we open up the question, one of no mean importance, as to how and why it is, that religion, which ought to be the source of peace, is even thus productive of violence and bigotry, we shall not have much difficulty in detecting and exposing the cause of this. Religion is the business of eternity; it is the system upon which depend the everlasting interests not only of each individual, but of the whole mass of mankind. True religion can be but one

in principle. It may be developed amongst men in a variety of forms, but in spirit and in essence it can be but one; for religion being the knowledge and practice of the will of God, and God being but one,—one, too, who is immutable, with whom there can be “no variableness, neither shadow of turning,”\* his will must of necessity be the same, since the will of the Divine Being is only the rule, or law, according to which he works amongst, and deals with his creatures. As, therefore, the will of God must be one, immutable and undeviating; so true religion, that is, the knowledge and practice of his will, can only be one, however many and various are the systems and forms, under which it develops itself amongst men. Unfortunately, the adherent of each form or system is apt to imagine, that his own is the only one with which the true principle can consist and be exhibited; thus mistaking the development for the principle. Acting, however, upon this mistaken opinion, combined with the proper conviction that true religion can be but one, each is liable to persuade himself that he alone holds the truth, and that all others must be in error. Now supposing this conclusion to be a just one, the necessary consequence is, that all in this state of error are in danger of eternal condemnation. The dread of this excites the zeal of our imaginary inquirer; he makes it his business, feeling for those whose peril he assumes, to endeavour to persuade them of their error, and to enlighten them in the truth; they being as well satisfied that they are right, as he and those that act with him think themselves to be. But the subject on which they are engaged being of the most vital importance to each, their strongest feelings, their passions are aroused, and the weakness and frailty of poor human nature being fermented in the turmoil of these, anger, jealousy, hatred, and ill will, are elaborated in the contest that ensues.

If such be the too common effects and results of controversy, he will be accounted a bold man, indeed, who ventures into its stormy and perturbing element, hoping to avoid the raging of its waves, to stem the vehemence of its powerful current, and to assuage something of its fury. Yet as the thing is not impossible, nor, therefore, hopeless, if attempted in the proper spirit, so to have endeavoured to accomplish this, even should success not attend the effort, is a work worthy of a discreet enterprize, and may, under God, be productive of good. That oil cast upon the troubled surface of the ocean will so appease and smooth its roughness, as to allow the diver to descend into its depths, and in security to rifle it of its treasures, is a fact well known and occasionally practised; and equally credible and certain is it, that the

\* James, i. 17.



oil of the gospel, the only source whence the light of truth can arise, is far more effectual, if properly and wisely applied, to allay and mitigate the jealousies and fears which ruffle the calmness of religious enquiry, and to assist the discovery and development of truth, than even the natural substance can be upon the stormy deep.

In entering upon such a task, then, one of the first duties incumbent upon us, is to state the true principle upon which we ought to act in a matter of this kind, that is to define what religious toleration is. In doing so, I shall take as my guide that authority to which I referred in the opening of this address. Professor SMYTHE was accustomed to say that "religious toleration was the respecting a man's religious opinions, simply because to him they are religious, and for no other reason." Nothing can be more just. However erroneous the religious opinions of another may be, we should never forget that to him they are as precious and as dear, as truth is to us, and that his religious feelings and affections, however misplaced, are as much engaged in them as if more wisely directed by the better convictions that we enjoy. Anything offensive to these is an injury of the individual's feelings; and though it is our duty to propagate truth, and in no way to promote or encourage error, it is not our duty, nor have we any right in doing so, to inflict an injury. We may not do "evil that good may come, whose damnation is just."\* If, then, in any degree, we fail to respect the religious opinions of others, however erroneous; if we dare to treat them, or the holders of them, with scorn, with ribaldry, and contempt; much less to abridge their personal liberties and privileges on account of them, or to render them up to the tender mercies of the torture, the faggot, and the stake; in either case we violate the great liberties of man, we depart from the grand principles of religion itself, and we thereby impede and interrupt the calm but sure progress, the firm and majestic march of the truth we profess to serve.

I am well aware that the avowal of such sentiments as these will be strongly repudiated by some, as modern liberalism. But I am not to be alarmed by a name, whatever it may be intended to denote. On the contrary, I am prepared to maintain that it is not only liberalism, but Christianity also. When the divinely meek and patient Jesus was denied the common rights of hospitality by the bigoted Samaritans, because his course was toward Jerusalem, where stood the rival fane of that which reared itself on Mount Gerizim; and when the beloved John, out of a mistaken zeal for his master's dignity and worth, which palaces might have been

\* Rom. iii. 8.

proud to entertain, and which many prophets and kings had desired to behold, but had not been blessed with the sight of, exhorting him to avenge himself by calling down fire from heaven upon them, and that too, after the example of one of the most sainted men of old, the holy Elijah ; then did the Deity in Christ shine forth resplendent with mercy and love, and he mildly declined the suggestion made to him, with the salutary remonstrance to his Apostle, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of ;" thus, by example more forcible than any precept, setting forth the truth which has thence been taught, that if vengeance and indignation be the characteristics of a hero, forgiveness and compassion are those of God. The forbearance which he thus manifested, and so practically taught, is that which all, who profess to be his disciples, ought themselves to exhibit. And were this truly so, however wide might be our differences, they would not be productive of that bitterness and acrimony, which too frequently reign in religious discussions.

I would pause here to observe that in both the cases I have referred to above, namely, that of the tendency of religious enquiry to bigotry and persecution, and that of the spirit with which we ought to act towards those who differ from us, I have of course supposed in each case the disputants to be persons really desirous of learning and knowing the truth. Too many there are who enter upon matters of this kind from motives of vanity, personal ambition, temporal aggrandisement, and a thousand other human and worldly passions. Religion has ever been made, by such persons, the instrument and the means of gratifying their peculiar failings, and has, of necessity, been thus deeply injured by these its pretended friends. With partizans of such a stamp, I have nothing to do. I neither notice nor attempt to refute them, but content myself with laying down the broad and fundamental principles, on which religious differences ought to be dealt with ; resting well assured, that the advocacy and maintenance of these is the best antidote to such misguided zeal, and that those who are of the character I have noted will always be detected by the fact of their invariably disregarding, in the warmth and ardour of their controversial crusades, the true principles by which all our deliberations on, and investigations of, such deeply important and interesting questions ought to be regulated and carried on. "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath ; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."\*

It will much assist to encourage a true spirit of liberality, as well as open the way to the more immediate subject of this address,

\* James, i. 19, 20.

if we first give ourselves to the enquiry respecting the nature and quality of religion. Now religion is an instinct of man ; that is, there are certain affections and feelings of the human mind, that must be devoted to some object other than those connected with our present sublunary state. This is attested, if by nothing else, by the fact, that there never has yet been known a people so barbarous and depraved, as to be wholly destitute of a religious profession at least. It is a most humiliating testimony to the pride and self-sufficiency of human reason, and a fearful caution to those, who rely too much upon mental cultivation for the improvement of the human species, that it has needed high attainments and much learning, falsely so called, to generate the infidel and the atheist ; for though knowledge, if chastened by religion, and education, if founded on it, can never be too widely diffused ; yet without this, which is its only check, it is, as must be but too well known, the original cause of sin and death entering into the world ; and cannot fail, therefore, to be working out its own natural effects.

Religion, then, is an instinct ; but like all the other instincts of man, it is capable of cultivation and improvement, or of being deteriorated and deadened, according as it is wisely and faithfully disciplined. Thus its feelings and affections, if properly regulated, produce the true Christian ; if neglected, the professing formalist, “the heathen, in his blindness, bowing down to wood and stone,” the secret unbeliever, and the daring infidel. It will be asked, what capacity is there in man for the rule and governance, the cultivation and improvement, of his religious principles ? and the fearful, the degrading, though faithful answer is, there is none. Religion, we have seen before, is the knowledge and practice of the will of God, but “the condition of man since the fall is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God.”\* Such is an admirable summary of the truth, which the Scripture has in mercy revealed to us, which else we had never known, and which is confirmed by a number of passages, wherein it declares mankind to be “dead in trespasses and sins ;”†—to be “corrupt,” and to have “abominable iniquity ;”‡—that “there is no fear of God before their eyes ;”§—that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God ;”¶ or, to sum up the matter, in the complete and perfect judgment of him, who above all others knew what was in man ; “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked : who can know it ? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins.”¶¶ This is, indeed, a melancholy, though just condemnation of man, and it well becomes us to know it, and to profit by

\* Tenth Article of the Church of England. † Ephes. ii. 1.

‡ Psalms xiv. 1 ; liii. 1. § Rom. iii. 18. ¶ Rom. iii. 23. ¶¶ Jer. xvii. 9, 10.

the conviction and its legitimate consequences. For if man be thus utterly incapacitated by nature to exercise rightly the instinct that is in him; and if it be his nature to quench rather than to cherish, the flickering embers that smoulder in the ruins of his once noble, because innocent, nature; he must either find some other arm than his own to sustain him, or he must perish everlastingly.

The mercy of God has never left him without a hope of recovering his lost estate, and a promise of the means of doing so. At first, indeed, the plan of God was very faintly developed, as in the promise that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head," and for the first 2500 years was committed to a very frail and insecure channel of transmission, that of tradition, for we know of no Scripture before the time of Moses. Man, therefore, during that long period was left to his own resources, feebly aided by a traditionary revelation, and though once in the period the earth was baptized by the flood because of man's degeneracy, yet even this judgment availed not to hinder the declension of his successors into the depths of iniquity: thus fully attesting the utter inability of man to acquire and maintain holiness without some other means than he possessed by nature, or had hitherto enjoyed from God. Hence, also, by the way, we derive a very forcible argument, that the Almighty, having tried and proved the incapacity of tradition for faithfully imparting the knowledge of himself to man, and having thereby justified the wisdom and mercy of vouchsafing to him a written revelation of his will, because of his absolute need of it, will not, in these latter ages of the world, have recourse to a means of communicating his will to mankind, which in earlier times has been experimentally proved to be wholly inadequate to such a purpose.

The Scripture, then, was given to man expressly for the purpose of the right directing and cultivating of his religious affections, and thus supplying them with that which they so much need,—that is, true religion, or the knowledge and practice of godliness, that they may be edified and trained thereby.

The condition, then, in which man now stands is this. He has within him the ruins of religion. Like the disjointed fragments of some once noble and stately edifice, well worthy of the master skill and omnipotent genius of its founder, his religious feelings and affections lie scattered and mutilated within him, and though upon the ruined remnants that are heaped in disorder there, we may sometimes mark indications of symmetry and grace, and examples of its tracery and ornaments, that serve to give to our mind some vivid imaginings of what the whole must have been, when originally it stood complete in its proportions and harmony

a goodly building, the work of some sovereign architect and supreme artificer; yet amidst all the splendour of its broken and dilapidated members, we can find neither foundation nor corner stone, neither capital nor shaft, nor base, not even the key stone of an arch perfect, with which to commence and carry on the rebuilding of the prostrate fane, but all betoken such a desperate state of confusion and decay, the work of some wilfully malignant and distempered being, that the restoration and revival of the once glorious structure, baffle the ingenuity and power of the most enlightened and dexterous of mankind.

Such is a faint illustration of the depraved and prostrate condition of fallen man, in which, while it is impossible to trace the slightest symptom of a capability to rise again and to renew himself, there seems to be no limit in the contrary direction to his accumulating ruin and destruction, but like the Satan of Milton he is descending into an abyss which is immeasurable and bottomless,

“And, in the lowest deep, a lower deep,  
Still threatening to devour him, opens wide.”

From this lamentable state, however, there is One both able and willing to rescue him, and to build him up again in his pristine glory. That One is his Maker, his God. He is ready, and gracious, and mighty to redeem him, and is only waiting man's submission that he may be gracious to him.\* He has provided both plan and means for his re-edification. He will supply every part that is needed in the work, as well as the workmen to accomplish it. As when of old he would construct the tabernacle in the wilderness, and have it made after the model which himself furnished, saying unto Moses, “See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount,” and “called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Juda: and filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship,”† so now in the re-edifying of man, the temple in which he is at this day pleased to dwell in holiness, he devises the plan and means, and himself supplies the workman for the work. He is himself in Christ in an unknown and mysterious manner, the foundation and corner stone, the main pillar of the building, and the key stone of every arch within it, besides being at the same time the head and ornament of the edifice, the workman who shall fit each member in its proper

\* “Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you.” Isaiah, xxx. 18.

† Heb. viii. 5. and Exod. xxxi. 2—5.

place, and the spirit that shall combine the whole in majesty and effect, and so cement it in one that it shall be firm and imperishable, its top reaching unto heaven, its base grounded and established in the true faith.

The plan and means which he has devised for this glorious and desirable consummation, are revealed to man in that written record of his Creator's will, which has been so graciously vouchsafed to him, and which is commonly called the Scripture, or the Bible. Man, therefore, is thus placed in a peculiar situation. As before he could not raise himself, by reason of his debased nature, so now he cannot only do nothing in the work, but must also conform himself to the method prescribed by God, and only take and do that which the Almighty has provided and offers to him. It is, therefore, of the very first importance to know what are the plan and means devised and offered of God.

Now these are such, we may be sure, as are not only worthy of Him who is their source, but also the most suitable to the infirm nature of him for whom they have been devised. And yet, apparently, they are contrary to every thing which that nature seems itself to look for and expect. Man feeling that he is an offender against God, and conscious of his own degeneracy before him, yet not aware of his extremity, and that he "cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God," is in this his blind and misguided condition incessantly but vainly striving to do that, for which there is no capacity within him. Like the fabled Sisyphus of old, he is for ever toiling and wearying himself at a labour, which no exertion or diligence can achieve, and which at the very moment he seems to expect success, and anticipates the reward of his struggles, falls back again to the deep from whence he had in vain raised it, and thus blasts every cherished hope that he had before him.

The work of God in the re-edification of man is altogether independent of any help or exertions of his own. For, as we have seen that he has no power to assist himself, so it would have been impossible for God,—I speak of him as he has taught me by his revelation to speak, and not of my poor and weak comprehension of his might,—it would have been impossible for him to have devised a plan, in which man could have borne a part. "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law."\* The fault of this is not in God, but in man. It argues no deficiency in him, "yea, let God be true, but every man a liar;" † but it proves the most profound and all-pervading delinquency in the soul of his creatures,

\* Gal. iii. 21.

† Rom. iii. 4.

when, amidst all the ruins of what God had first made him, there remains not a relic worthy of being employed in his renewal and reconstruction. Man, therefore, has nothing in him by which the work of God can be helped or carried on, "without, the grace of God by Christ preventing him, that he may have a good will, and working with him, when he has that good will."\*

According, then, to this hopeless and helpless condition of his creature, has the Almighty framed and ordered his plan and means for man's recovery. We have seen the utter impossibility of man doing this himself, and it is because of this very impossibility that God has been pleased to work out his redemption. "He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness it sustained him."† To this end God requires of man, that he shall see, and know, and be satisfied of, and confess, and bewail, and deplore his own weakness, and frailty, and infirmities, and sin; and thus having humbled himself in his own sight, and emptied himself as it were, of himself, so that he is conscious that in himself there is "no good thing,"‡ that he has no will to think a good thought, nor power to do a good action, he shall, thus deprived of all confidence in himself, cast all his care, and hopes, and confidence upon him, believing that he careth for him. His "strength is to sit still;"§ "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."|| God's grace alone is sufficient for man; for God's strength is made perfect in the weakness of his creature.¶ And what does God offer to man as a testimony to induce him to do this? His own word, and nothing more; his own promise, and nothing less. He, who when he made man, spake and it was done, says that he will new make him, and demands of him that he shall receive as his satisfaction for this, the same power that brought him into existence, the word of the Most High. "Who hath made man's mouth, or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord?"\*\* And as he made these, so hath he power to make them eloquent, and attentive, and single in spiritual views, and hearing, and speech, out of the abundance of the spirit that he shall endow them with.

Hence, then, the religion of the Bible consists in man's self-conviction and abasement, and so resting implicitly upon God, his verity, word, and power. These are the grand principles upon which its whole scheme is founded, and which in its own terms are simply denominated, repentance and faith; "repentance whereby men forsake sin, and faith, whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God."††

\* Tenth Article of the Church of England. † Isaiah, lix. 16. ‡ Rom. vii. 18.  
 § Isaiah, xxx. 7. || Ibid. xxx. 15. ¶ II. Cor. xii. 9. \*\* Exod. iv. 11.  
 †† Catechism of the Church of England.

To assist man in this work, or rather to enable him, who else might run astray, to follow out these principles rightly, the Almighty has vouchsafed to him at various times special subjects whereon to exercise his faith, and by exhibiting the simplicity and soundness of that, to testify the strength of his conviction in his own insufficiency, and of his confidence resting secure in God. For examples of these we have only to open our Bible, and we shall find them in every page, but for a beautiful compendium of them the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews should be "read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested." But though in former ages, the Almighty was pleased to set forth various proofs by which faith in him might be exemplified, and the life of faith was evidenced in different ways, as in the cases of Abraham, Moses, David, and many others; yet having in times past spoken unto our fathers by the prophets, he hath in these latter times spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath made heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.\* And whereas in former times, during the progress of the law, the schoolmaster of man to bring him unto faith, and Christ,† there were allowed many different opportunities of shewing faith in God's promises, otherwise than in those relating to his Messiah, and which were distant in their nature, but these we speak of were to be immediate both in acceptance and effect; so now, having by all these preliminaries fixed a sure and certain knowledge of himself in the world, he has appointed but one way of approach to him, and one only method of reconciliation with him, and one single object of faith, that glorious spectacle to men and angels, the God-man Jesus Christ, and him crucified. No man can come to the Father but by him.‡ "There is none other name given among men whereby we must be saved."§ "By him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses."||

Hence, then, it results that faith in Christ, as the means appointed of God, is the only power unto salvation. If we ask how, as the philosophising rationalist will do, the answer is by believing that he is such; if we ask why, the reply is, we know not, but we believe that so it is. If we seek to satisfy the doubts that will arise, as to how the death of the innocent can be a satisfaction to a supremely just Being for the offence of the guilty; how guilt can be pardoned by the suffering of the guiltless; the only solution to the difficulty, astounding as it is to human reason, and unfathomable by human intellect, is, that God will "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth on Jesus."¶ Satisfied with this reply, the meek and humble Christian rests his hope in the word

\* Heb. i. 1, 2.

† Gal. iii. 24.

‡ John vi. 44.

§ Acts, iv. 12.

|| Acts xiii. 39.

¶ Rom. iii. 26.



and promise of God, leaving to him who hath planned it, every seeming difficulty of his own scheme, knowing well by many a precious exercise and experience of his trust in Him here, that however hard these things may be to our present limited and finite understandings, yet that

“ God is his own interpreter,  
And he will make it plain.”

He seeks not, then, to superadd anything to the assurances of God. They are his covenant, his bond. Upon them he stands, and as he will add nothing to them, so neither will he suffer them in aught to be diminished, or in any degree weakened or disparaged.

As Christ, then, is the only power of God unto salvation, so because of man's weakness and frailty, as well as to propagate and keep alive the truth amongst men, he has appointed means to this end. These are of the simplest kind possible, and like all else that God does, they are apparently to man's reason, that is, as unfit for the work they are designed to subserve, as can well be conceived; but the reason of their being such is, that man's faith may be exercised in their seeming insufficiency. These means are the ministry of the Word, the Sacraments, and the ordinances of prayer and praise. By the ministry of the Word, which St. Paul has denominated “the foolishness of preaching,” religion is propagated; by the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and by the ordinances of prayer and praise, it is ratified and kept alive.

Thus simple, then, in its principles and means, is the religion which God has given to us in the Scriptures. The simplicity of it, which to the natural man is incomprehensible, which makes it “to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness,”\* is that which so powerfully bespeaks it as of God, whose ways are always simple yet sublime, far away out of our sight; and so beautifully exhibits the wondrous nature of his love, mercy, and condescension to us, his fallen creatures. “In great humility did his Son, Christ Jesus, come to visit us,”† taking into the Godhead the manhood of his creature; and through the weaknesses and infirmities of that creature's nature, displaying the fulness of the Divine Being visibly. He has thus rendered the most pleasing attributes of the Deity, those of Love, Mercy, Forbearance, and Tenderness, intelligible to all men. He has made the graces by which these are to be learned and practised within the reach and compass of all, by the simplicity of the means which communicate them. Instead of a burthen-some and wearying system of works and ceremonials, grievous and heavy to be borne, he has made the channel of communion with

\* I. Cor. i. 23.

† Collect for the First Sunday in Advent.

him exceedingly plain, thus shewing that in operation as well as in effect "his yoke is easy, and his burthen light."\* As in man there is no difference, for that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,"† so he hath shewn no respect of persons in the means of reconciliation which he has afforded, but has made them such as are level to the capacity of all men. "The wise man shall not glory in his wisdom, neither shall the mighty man glory in his might, nor shall the rich man glory in his riches : but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth : for in these things I delight, saith the Lord."‡ No philosophy of man, however vast and comprehensive, could attain to this knowledge of God, for "who by searching could ever find out the Almighty to perfection;"§—no wealth of man could purchase an admission into his courts, or an intimacy with him; no physical energy of man is capable of accomplishing the impossible task of climbing up into heaven. In respect of means as of rewards, which are to be the result of those means, God has placed all men upon the most level equality. The wisest has no capacity for knowing more of God than he has revealed to the humblest, nor of serving him better than the uneducated. The monarch in his palace, daily clad in purple and fine linen, cannot render himself more acceptable than the poverty of the poorest is equal to; for God himself "lifteth up the beggar from the dung-hill, that he may set him with the princes, even with the princes of his people."|| And yet, unhappily, it is this, its all-equal character, that renders the religion of God obnoxious to man. As was said just now, the whole plan is formed upon the self-abasement of man. But this is so entirely contrary to his own nature, that he is by it led to oppose, to gainsay, to deteriorate, and to reject this gracious condescension of his God, and vainly to endeavour, either to form a system of his own, or out of that which God has in mercy given, to mould another to his own destruction. The religion which man always hopes to establish, and if he succeeds, always does found, is one in which he is himself the principal agent of his own redemption; for if ever sacrifices be offered in the stead of himself or his sins, it is his offering them, and so making them sacrifices, and not the things offered, that constitutes the sacrifices. This is the grand characteristic of all human religion, as distinguishing it from that of the Bible. It is "of works," not "of grace."¶

Hence, then, we derive a most admirable practical principle for testing all religious professions. That of the Bible is the only true

\* Matt. xi. 30.

† Rom. iii. 23.

‡ Jer. ix. 23, 24.

§ Job, xi 7.

|| I. Sam. ii. 8.

¶ Rom. xi. 6.

one. All that do not accord with the simple system therein developed, but consist of additions to, or distortions of it, are always to be detected by their allowing so much ability to man, and thereby detracting from God.

Now, there has been no system so eminently successful in artfully over-riding the simple truths of the gospel, and in teaching for doctrine the commandments of men, as that of the Papacy. From first to last, it is an ingenious device to elevate man in his own estimation; to teach him to rest in himself, and not in God; to add to and multiply the means, which He has appointed for carrying out his own work; in a word, to assist God in his already perfect and finished plan of man's redemption. Thus the Bible itself, the plain word of God, which he that runneth may read, which our Lord himself challenged the people of Jerusalem to search as testifying of him; by the instruction and edification of which at home, under his grandmother and mother, two faithful women, a Timothy became capable of being a preacher of the word, and the associate and fellow-labourer of St. Paul himself; that Scripture, to the test of which the Bereans brought the doctrine of that eminent apostle, and because of their doing so, were accounted noble among the faithful; this same volume, it is pretended by the Romish Church, cannot be read of all men to edification, but requires the special help and interpretation of the priesthood to ensure a wise understanding of it to the people. So that by this the efficacy of God's word is not allowed to consist of the things taught therein, the truths revealed, and the plan of salvation developed, but in the ministry of them who communicate them; in the virtue, power, and inherent grace of those who supply the people with it; leaving the latter in a state in which they cannot feed upon the bread of life themselves, but must have it gathered, and kneaded, and chewed, and masticated, and digested for them by others. But even more than this, it assumes to itself to be the judge, as well as the interpreter of Scripture, and dares to blot out of its pages the commandment of God, which condemns its most idolatrous error of image-worship; while with a duplicity quite agreeable to such profane audacity, it splits the tenth commandment into two, to preserve their numerical parity. It makes the decrees of what they call the Church, by which it means not the Lord's household, but the minister of it, whom it designates the priesthood, over-ride the authority of the written word, and mite out to the people a scanty and impure portion of that bread of life; and as if all this were not sufficient, it superadds tradition also, and from this supposed treasury of religious truths, of which it assumes to itself to be the guardian and purveyor, it pretends to find authority for ordinances and practises not discoverable in the

word of God. Thus, to them, the very source and fountain of truth is poisoned, and whosoever would attempt their conversion and regeneration must, like Elisha of old, when he healed the waters of Israel that were naught, by seeking the spring of the waters and casting the salt in there, begin by purifying the Bible of the corruptions that are heaped upon it.

But as human additions have been made to the Bible, and the spirit of man has prevailed to the mystification and unscriptural wresting of the pure word of God to justify his own inventions, so these have been of the most numerous and multifarious description. We have seen that the only means appointed of God in his Holy Word are the Ministry of that Word, the Sacraments of Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, and the ordinances of prayer and praise. It has been the business of the Roman Catholic to add abundantly to these, and by multiplying the rites and ceremonies of his church, to conceal from the view of its members the one foundation and ground of all our hope, Justification by Faith, through Christ crucified. The several parts of the system which he has thus vainly devised, consist of the addition of five Sacraments to the two which Christ ordained; the shortening one of those instituted by Him, that of the Lord's Supper, by denying the cup and wine to the people, and making the priest receive in this particular in behalf of them; of the doctrine of transubstantiation, by which it is pretended that to the priesthood is committed the creative and miraculous power of converting the symbols of bread and wine into the veritable body and blood of Christ which were offered on the cross; the praying to, for their intercession and influence with God, and so the worshipping of, saints and angels; the adoration and unscriptural reverence offered to images and relics of holy persons and things; the praying for the dead; the doctrine of purgatory, in which men are supposed to be purified in the interval between death and the judgment; that of works of supererogation, or the excess of virtue which some men are assumed capable of doing over and above what is sufficient for themselves, and so having enough and to spare for others less virtuous and holy than themselves; the using a language not intelligible to the people in their public services, and so shutting them out from all communion with their minister, the priest, who is thus made to pray *for* them, not *with* them, and so to be an intercessor with God in their behalf, instead of leading them, by a reasonable service, to present their bodies "a living sacrifice holy, acceptable unto God;"\* These are the vanities, the incumbrances, and the deformities which they have piled upon the beautiful and simple plan of God in Christ; these are the "heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne," which

\* Rom. xii. 1.

they bind and lay on men's shoulders,\* making sad thereby the heart of the righteous, whom God hath not made sad; and strengthening the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life,† “saying peace, peace, when there is no peace;”‡ for “there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.”§

It is true, indeed, that she pretends to find in Scripture an authority for every one of these practices: but what shall we say of such a pretence, when she makes the word of God a sealed book to the people, denies their capacity to understand and construe it aright, forbids them the use of it, and so hides from their view, the authority on which she assumes to act? What shall we think of a system which pretends to have an authority, and that a written one, and of God, for what it does, but when the authority is asked for, replies, that it is not to be understood, or examined, by any but a privileged few, denying thereby the testimony of Moses, that “secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and our children for ever, that we may do all the words of the law?”|| Should, however, any member of this faith, feeling himself uneasy and doubtful under the imposing, but not convincing yoke of this mental tyranny, and being more bold than obedient to its galling despotism, presume to open the volume of truth for himself, and having done so, be unable to find any grounds whatever for the things he has been required to believe, as contained and made known to man within it, an answer is ready to silence and subdue him, though it carry no conviction with it. The reply is, that though he cannot see those things, the church, that is the priesthood, can, and that he must believe, as they understand and teach them; that they are points which bygone ages have fixed by the decrees of councils, and therefore, are undeniable; that tradition, the most vague, unsatisfactory, and insecure channel by which memorials of past eras can be preserved, has in the church transmitted these things from generation to generation, and faithfully handed them down to the present one. So that the inquirer is, in fact, diverted from the written and imperishable record of God's will, to the frail and fallible guidance of men of like passions with himself; and instead of reposing his convictions and his hopes in a calm, holy, and comfortable confidence upon God, he is required to prop up his wavering and inconstant opinions by trusting to his fellows, contrary to the solemn warning of the Bible, “Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein he is to be accounted of?”¶

\* Matt. xxiii. 4.    † Ezek. xiii. 22.    ‡ Jer. vi. 14.    § Isaiah, lvii. 21.  
 || Deut. xxix. 29.    ¶ Isaiah, ii. 22.

But in truth what is the one false and hollow principle upon which all these errors are founded? They are not to be read in Scripture, nor can they be proved thereby, and consequently, they are not of God. Not being of God they must of necessity be of man. In fact they rest upon that which is flattering to his vanity and pride, lulling and deceptive of his conscience. All these things are to be done upon his account, he participating in them, and so he is made, apparently, to work out his own salvation; but should there seem to be anything defective in the things to be done, or in him who is to do them, the priesthood render everything efficacious, remove every obstacle, and perfect for him that which he is unable to accomplish. Let him only trust himself to them and their guidance, following implicitly wheresoever they may lead him, doing obediently whatever they may lay upon him, and he cannot do wrong. If religion be not a personal matter, that is one by which each individual is himself to be influenced, regenerated, sanctified, and so, out of his inward holiness whereby he becomes holy as God is holy, to be rendered capable of living before the Eternal One hereafter, and of being a glorious denizen of the celestial abodes, this system might pass unregarded. But since it is utterly opposed to all this, restraining him from spiritual views and exercises, and substituting instead "a shew of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body,"\* it must be denounced and condemned, with grief be it spoken, as destructive of the best interests of mankind, and of working death and an everlasting doom, out of that which has brought life and immortality to light.

In this view of the Roman Catholic system, we have left unnoticed its persecuting principles, though generally in the consideration of its tenets, these are made to bear a very prominent part. They are, indeed, nothing more than the natural results of the system, which being of man, of his passions and frailties, thus develops itself in the most terrific form. Yet horrible and heart-rending as one of the tales of woe under this head; fearful as are the details of her tender mercies, who has made herself "drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus;"† awful as her duplicity has been in stirring up the civil power against those, whom she has denounced as heretics, and handing them over to the faggot and the stake, with the impious mockery and prayer, that she desires they may be dealt with tenderly; unparalleled, even in the annals of savage barbarity, as have been the ingenuity of torture and persecution which she has practised; these, though startling to humanity, and degrading to contemplate,

\* Col. ii. 23

† Rev. xvii. 6.

are not, after all, the things that stamp upon her indelibly the judgment and the doom she merits. These are what arouse our feelings, and excite our passions, and are therefore liable, if not certain, to irritate us to like errors, and to lead our judgment astray from the consideration of what is the really fatal and deadening influence of the system, to its comparatively harmless, though horrifying effects. We should bear in mind the warning, "fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul," and if her bloody acts had been limited to the former alone, they had been comparatively tolerable; but it is the tyranny and thralldom she has exercised over the souls of men, and the death she has worked among them, that makes her power most truly terrible and destructive.

To sum up all, then, that the Roman Catholic holds, over and above what revelation has taught us of the religion of God;—he superadds tradition, the decrees of the Pope and of councils, and the interpretations of the Church, that is the priesthood, to the plain word of God. For the power of all the ordinances of religion, he depends upon a presumed virtue or grace inherent in the priesthood, so that without their operation with him, not even the grace of God is effectual within him. The priesthood must always be doing for him, giving him at baptism regeneration, in the mass, crucifying in his behalf the Lord of life afresh, at his death supplying him with an unction which is a passport to heaven, praying him out of his supposed temporary state of torment in purgatory, out-doing the wise virgins of the parable, and affording him oil for his untrimmed lamp, out of the superabundant treasury of their works of supererogation; or if by his life and conversation he has merited it, exalting him at once to glory, and conferring upon his sainted spirit, the honours and the attributes of Deity. All these things are done for him of the priesthood. They, and not Christ crucified; the ordinances and things they do, are to him the power of God unto salvation. In all this, what else do we see, but a melancholy picture of man preferring the vain task of working his own redemption, in reliance on the imaginary aid of his fellow-man, rather than depending simply, and singly, and wholly upon God for it. It is like Moses, not contented to speak unto the rock, that it pour forth its waters at the bidding of the Almighty, but with indiscreet zeal, striking his rod against it, and saying "we must fetch you water out of this rock." Man vainly essaying to do the work of God, and to be unto his fellows in the stead of God. Reviving the worst fallacy with which human nature has ever been deceived, a plan "of works, and not of grace."

The object of this lecture has been to expose the fallacies and errors of Popery. In doing so, I have pursued a course not often adopted in efforts of this kind. The common method of dealing

with Romish errors is to take them separately, and discuss them apart, to bring a vast deal of historical lore and oft-repeated argument to bear upon them, and thus to treat them as if they were questions of which it is worthy of consideration, whether they have any intrinsic worth or not. Now, let them be in themselves ever so intrinsically right and good, they are, notwithstanding, human additions to the means which God has appointed, and we are not only forbidden to diminish aught of his plan, but also to add anything to it. "Thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish therefrom," was the golden rule of Moses. That such a method is not without its value, as serving to sift and fathom every pretence that is set up for the propagation of error, is not indeed to be denied. But though serviceable, it is not the best or the safest to be relied on. It gives more importance to each particular point than it deserves, and, for the time, makes the one under consideration assume the character of being "the head and front of offending," yet, as soon as this one is disposed of, another as self-sufficient and as false rises up, like the reviving heads of the fabled Hydra, and requires, as its predecessor did, all our labour and strength to subdue it. This is the plan most favourable to the supporters of error, for so long as they can carry on controversy about particular points and doctrines, and shun the inquiry as to what is truth, so long are they enabled to keep the contest alive, and thus divert the minds of their adherents from coming to any satisfactory conclusion respecting it. A bold and skilful general will not suffer his adversary to do this. He will not submit to be harrassed first upon one point, and then another, allowing his enemy time thereby to strengthen himself where he has been weakened, and at last, by the frequency of feeble efforts to wear him out. On the contrary, he will compel him to concentrate such strength as he has; he will draw him to a-head; and confident in his own resources, as well as in the virtue of his cause, he will strike a blow, which shall be for principle and for right, and which shall not fail to accomplish the just effect he designs. This is the only way in which truth can ever be maintained; by being bold and strenuous in defence of it, and making that defence consist of the sincere, honest, and open assertion of its nature and doctrines. Whenever truth is thus faithfully set forth, and error brought into the field against it, the last is discomfited by the very array and marshalling of the first.

This is the nature of the course I have now attempted to pursue. I have set forth the true nature and incapacity of man; I have shewn the principles upon which the Almighty has revealed himself as ready to deliver him; I have pointed out the frailties of his nature, which render him adverse to the system, and make him



desirous of adopting one of his own; and I have exhibited the faith of the Roman Catholic as partaking from first to last of man's system, and not of God's. I have used his case, in fact, as the most elaborate exemplification of human error that has ever yet been contrived. What is, then, really the nature of this false system? It is nothing more nor less than the natural and spontaneous production of man's own heart, "that heart which is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Need we wonder at this? Is there anything new in it all? Not the least. Poor human nature has ever been thus at work, weaving for itself its own web of destruction!—Shall we exult over the Catholic, and ridicule his pride of idolatry and vanity of system?—By no means, this would be to forget what manner of spirit we are of, and that but for grace we had stood in the like condemnation.—Should we, then, attempt by forcible means, to compel them to renounce their errors? Alas! this might make them hypocrites, and conformists, but would never produce regeneration and renewal of heart.—How, then, should we deal with them?—By lamenting over, and grieving for, and having compassion on their waywardness; by bringing their case before God, and beseeching his enlightenment of their understandings; by making their case ours, which in truth it is, not only because of our common nature by which we are as liable to strong delusion and to the belief of a lie,\* as they are, and therefore knowing this, ought to have the more compassion upon them that are ignorant and out of the way; but also because it is the duty, as well as the privilege of every Christian, to be seeking with the wisdom of the serpent, and the harmlessness of the dove, and the simplicity of his Redeemer, to win souls to Christ, to convince them of the error of their ways, and so become fellow-workers together with God in his glorious work of recovering the world unto himself. We should endeavour in this respect, however humbly, and at whatever distance from Him, to imitate the love of God. He hates and abhors sin, cannot endure to look upon that which is sinful, has adjudged it to eternal wrath and damnation, and yet has such love, and mercy, and compassion for sinners, as to give his only begotten Son to die in their behalf, and to be their reconciliation to Him. This will not make us forgetful or negligent of the truth, but rather the more zealous for it; since the more we see the weakness and failing of our fellow-creatures, the more shall we feel the necessity of letting our light shine before them, that they may be led to glorify God. The more we know of God and of his ways, the more shall we be induced to have compassion upon our fellow-men, as we know that he has

\* II. Thess. ii. 11.

had compassion upon us; and consequently the more kindliness of feeling that we have in this matter, the more testimony is there in us, that the love of God is prospering in our hearts; for "he who loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"\*

\* I. John, iv. 20.

