

PULPIT ELOQUENCE

OF

The Nineteenth Century:

BEING SUPPLEMENTARY TO THE HISTORY AND REPOSITORY  
OF PULPIT ELOQUENCE, DECEASED DIVINES;

AND CONTAINING DISCOURSES OF

EMINENT LIVING MINISTERS

IN

EUROPE AND AMERICA,

WITH

SKETCHES BIOGRAPHICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE

BY

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WITH AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY,

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## DISCOURSE XIX.

ALBERT BARNES.

THE remark that God never endows a man with the gift of doing more than one thing *well*, receives a striking refutation in the history of Mr. Barnes. It were difficult to determine whether he excels as preacher or *expositor*—whether he is more the plodding student or the pulpit orator—the successful pastor of a particular flock, or the theological writer and commentator for the *people*. Of his adaptedness for the one position, a pastorate of more than a quarter of a century with a large and influential church, is a sufficient evidence, and that he is not less skillful as the annotator and biblical critic, is evinced by the wide and increasing circulation of his “Notes” and publications of various kinds.

Mr. Barnes, like most men of mark, had his origin in humble life. He was born the son of a tanner, in the quiet little village of Rome, New York, December 1st, 1798; and in early life assisted his father at his trade, and at the same time, by application to reading and study, laid the basis of a solid education. It was not until he had reached the age of twenty-two years, that he was led to a saving knowledge of Christ, when he united with the church in his native village. This was the same year (1820) that he graduated at Hamilton College, having pursued his studies there only in connection with the senior class. In November of that year he entered the Theological Seminary at Princeton, where, after a three years' course, he spent another year as resident graduate. He was licensed to preach, in April, 1824, and on the twenty-fifth day of the following February, ordained and installed as pastor of the Presbyterian church, Morristown, New Jersey. His ministry in this place, which was one of zeal and efficiency, continued for five years; when he accepted, much against the wishes of his people, a call from the First Presbyterian church in Philadelphia, and entered upon the duties of his new field, June 25th, 1830; a position which he continues to fill to this day.

Mr. Barnes has, thus far, led a life of active and laborious toil. The labor which he has performed—a large part of it in the early morn, while other men are asleep—would seem to be enough to crush any constitution but one of iron. It is not strange that for a while, of late years, he was deprived of all use of his eyes, and in other respects almost unfitted for service. His Commentaries alone, in some sixteen or eighteen volumes, are a monument of unremitting industry. It must be peculiarly gratifying to their author to witness the general favor with which they have been and are received. It is stated that not less than twenty-eight thousand volumes of the “Notes” were printed in the year ending with December, 1856; at which time it was estimated that the circulation had reached, in the aggregate, about sixty-seven thousand copies. Some of them have been translated into several languages.

Besides these, he has published a great number of volumes of essays, reviews, sermons, addresses, etc., of a practical or dogmatical character. Taken together, it was estimated at the time referred to, that the circulation of all his works had amounted to five hundred thousand volumes. His "Commentaries," as indeed all his works, are of a popular cast, without any great display of learning, but meeting a difficulty fairly, and penetrating at once into the core of the subject, and opening it up to the comprehension of every mind.

As a preacher, Mr. Barnes belongs to the first rank of American divines. His style is perfectly neat and transparent, and his fresh and weighty thoughts are uttered with the various essentials of true effectiveness. His pulpit eloquence is of the character of a quiet, deep, wide, and fertilizing river, rather than of a rapid and rushing cataract. He enters the sanctuary with a humble and subdued air, and ascends the pulpit apparently unconscious of the presence of a congregation. While waiting the hour of service, he sits as if in meditation or prayer, with his head leaning upon his hand; and reads the Scriptures and the hymn, and leads in prayer, with careful propriety and dignified simplicity. Of late years he does not often preach from a manuscript; but his eyes rest upon the Bible, except at intervals of searching glances at the congregation assembled. It is said that the same elaborate research, the same clear apprehension and statement, the same purity, elevation, and strength of language, the same felicity of illustration which have commended his various works to popular favor, characterize his ministrations.

We are happy in being able to lay before the readers of this volume, a sermon which has not before been printed, and which we are sure will be read with interest and profit. The theme is novel, and it is handled with a master's skill.

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## THE INFLUENCE OF THE GOSPEL ON THE IMAGINATION.

"Casting down imaginations, and every high thought that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."  
—2 CORINTHIANS, x. 5.

THIS is to be done, according to the context, by the weapons of spiritual warfare with which the gospel furnishes us. It is not by carnal weapons, not by military force; but by an armor which the gospel supplies. The war is to be made on wrong opinions, on false philosophy, on reasonings or imaginations which tend to inflate the mind, and to corrupt the heart—the strongholds of sin. The object of the gospel is to achieve complete victory over the whole realm of mind and heart; to lead every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, or to subdue all to him. The sentiment of the text then is, that it is the design of the gospel to make war on the prevailing opinions, doctrines, sentiments, philosophy, and imaginings, in the world, which stand up against the dominion of Christ over the human soul.

From the wide range of thought into which we might be led by the text thus explained, I propose to select one single department, in order

to illustrate the effects of conversion. It is *its power of the imagination*, or *its influence in promoting a pure fancy*. We shall consider,

I. The influence of this faculty of mind upon the formation of character; and

II. The power which the gospel exerts in making it pure.

I. The influence of the imagination in the formation of character.

1. In illustrating this head, my first remark is, that it is probable that in numerous cases, if not in all, the imagination has more to do with the formation of character than any other faculty of the mind. It is constantly operating in bringing various objects before us; in giving them their peculiar color and attractiveness; and in seizing upon the affections of the heart. It takes us away from the cold, dull, tame realities of life, where there may be little to interest or attract us, or where there is much to pain us, to ideal scenes, which we may make just what we please. Its operations, either for good or bad, are *constant* and almost *incessant*, and almost *omnipotent*. The conscience acts comparatively rarely, and on great occasions. The *reason* and the *judgment* with most persons are allowed much less influence in forming their opinions than prejudice, and passion, and feeling. The memory has less influence in forming the character than the imagination—for there are, with us all, fewer things that we delight to remember, than that we hope to enjoy. Could we take our characters to pieces as we may a watch, and look at all the secret springs and influences that have gone to mold our views, we should probably be surprised to find how much the influence of the imagination has had to do with making us what we are. This remark in regard to the *constancy* of its operations, has peculiar importance in relation to the young. It is then that the character is formed; and it is then that the fancy is most vivid and controlling. The young have little to dwell upon in the past, for memory has, as yet, left few traces in their souls; they have not learned to look with distrust on the bright picturings of the future; for their anticipations have not been sobered by the disappointments and sadness of life; they are not often placed in circumstances which demand the stern application of the decisions of conscience and reason, and they allow visions of fancy to float before the eye of the soul, and the mind to be molded by their small, but fascinating forms. The characters of not a few persons are made up of mere imagination.

“The lunatic, the lover, and the poet,  
 Are of imagination all compact.  
 One has more devils than vast hell can hold,  
 That is the madman; the lover all as frantic,  
 Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:

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 One has more devils than vast hell can hold,  
 That is the madman; the lover all as frantic,  
 Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:

The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling  
 Doth glance from heaven to earth—from earth to heaven,  
 And as imagination bodies forth  
 The form of things unknown, the poet's pen  
 Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing  
 A local habitation and a name."

How many entire *characters* are there in the world, which have been formed wholly under the influence of romance, in which there has been nothing drawn from real life ; nothing from the sober maxims of truth ! Who can estimate the number of such characters which are forming under the influence of the novels poured from a prolific press every day in our times ?

2. My second remark is, that the imagination is evidently designed by the Creator to produce an important effect on the character and happiness of man. It is intended to raise us from the dull and tedious monotony of the realities which are around us, and to elevate us to the contemplation of higher and nobler objects. It is designed to place us amid anticipated scenes, which will be fitted to exalt what is groveling ; to purify what is gross ; and to remove what is debasing and corrupt. It is the power to create scenes of rare beauty ; to collect and blend the charms of nature, which exist singly in reality ; to place together in one group the choice thoughts of sentiment and devotion ; to unite in the same person excellences scattered among many in real life, that shall lead us to contemplate a perfect character ; to arrange circumstances that shall fill up the conception of unsullied purity and happiness in some scene such as the earth has never witnessed, and to hold these beautiful images before the mind until the heart shall love them and the soul shall pant for what it has not been permitted to enjoy. Such a power is evidently one that is adapted to have an important connection with religion—for religion relates much to the future and the unseen, and its influence on the soul is derived in a great measure from appeals made to the eye of faith, and not to the eye of sense. The things of religion are mostly in the invisible world. Its design is to raise the soul above the objects of time and sense, to the contemplation of anticipated beauties and glories there.

3. My third remark is, that the imagination, as it is actually exercised by the great mass of men, is little fitted to elevate or purify the character. There are operations of this faculty, corrupt in the extreme in their tendency, of which I can not speak. But there are also those exerting a vast influence to no advantage, which it is not improper to describe. Let any one look into the chambers of his own soul, and mark what is habitually passing there, and he will be sensible of the influence of this faculty on his character. Look at the amount of time which is spent in mere day-dreams as unreal as the dreams of the night, and as profitless. There are few—are there any?—who have not spent more time by far,



than is needful to secure the salvation of the soul, in schemes of fancied popularity, wealth, scholarship, amusement, building "castles in the air?"

A young man dreams of wealth, and instead of looking at the sober reality, and the little prospect he may have of obtaining it—on the little probability that it will satisfy him or be usefully employed if he secures it—he begins to act in the ideal scene, and thinks of the good which he will do, or the homage that will be paid him, or the comforts that he will gather around him, or the amusements which it will open before him—and the mind revels profitless in the unreal scene. Another dreams of honor: he is beyond all his competitors; he has carried all the prizes of scholarship; he outpeers all others in his profession; his path is thronged with clients, or his name is blazoned abroad as an author through other lands; the honor of his acquaintance is sought, and his name, he fancies, is immortal. He begins to live in that unreal scene, and for it, and it throws back an influence, good or bad, on every step he takes, and on every plan he forms. The votaries of fashion dwell on dress, and adulation, and the displays of person that shall charm every eye, and of triumphs at home and abroad; and amid such scenes the fancy roves, and such brilliant prospects entrance the soul. The politician, the orator, the poet, the scholar, the professional man, thus live no small part of their time amid day-dreams, and amid an influence not drawn from objects real, or ever *to be* real, but such as they choose at pleasure to form. The dull, cold, monotonous reality of life, they can not control: that must be met as it is; but these fancied realms may be shaped and peopled at pleasure, and there we may be just what we please—kings, princes, scholars, nobles, poets, orators, or, in personal accomplishments, the admired of all. These thoughts come into our minds in moments of leisure; they intrude into our houses of devotion, and often, in either case, we are willing to welcome them; for the sad or cheerless present has little to interest or hold us there.

4. My fourth remark is, that many of these imaginings may be innocent, but not all. Such musings as Cowper had are entirely harmless, when he said:

"Me oft has fancy, ludicrous and wild,  
Soothed with a waking dream of houses, towers,  
Trees, churches, and strange visages, expressed  
In the red cinders, while with peering eye  
I gazed, myself creating what I saw.  
Nor less amused, have I quiescent watched  
The sooty films that play upon the bars,  
Pendulous and foreboding, in the view  
Of superstition, prophesying still,  
Though still deceived, some stranger's near approach.  
'Tis thus the understanding takes repose  
In indolent vacuity of thought,  
And sleeps, and is refreshed."

If they produce no positive good, and do nothing to promote virtue and enlarge the heart, they, at least, leave no foundation for regret in view of any polluting influence. But this is the character of a small part of the imaginings of the heart. Many indulge themselves in forming pictures when the *reality* would be aggravated crime. Many dwell on fancied scenes, where such realities would only corrupt and destroy. The very passage of many a thought through the mind, though it should be expelled in a moment, leaves a stain there which is never on earth to be effaced; and many a thought of this description is recalled and dwelt upon until, under the influence of memory, it exerts afresh all the power it ever had to pollute the soul. No bosom, probably, and no place is safe from such intrusions. Even in reading the Bible, the mind often wanders far off to some ideal scene, and the words meet the eye, but the sense does not reach the heart. In prayer, the thoughts wander away from God, and, ere we are aware, while the words are on our lips, the fancy is reveling amid some ideal worldly scene. In the sanctuary, and on the Sabbath, while the words descriptive of the love of Christ, or the joys of heaven, fall on the listless ear, the fancy is picturing to itself some scene of future worldly delight, and images of wealth, and ambition, and gaudy dresses, and the dance, flit across the mind. It is not reason that corrupts, or judgment that blinds, or conscience that betrays men; it is that the imagination is busy with unreal scenes or pictures, that only corrupt, and the word of truth falls on inattentive ears.

Few indeed are the pictures which the fancy forms, which can be indulged in with safety to the soul; and, perhaps, when the sinner is judged, and the soul lost, it will be found, to an extent of which he little dreams now, that he will owe his everlasting ruin to an unchecked and unrestrained imagination, just as many a youth now is ruined in his character and peace by this cause: I say, unchecked and unrestrained.

*Conduct* that would destroy, is checked by the restraints of social life, and the *words* that would disgrace are checked by regard to character and reputation. But there are no such restraints on an evil heart. Its workings may be indulged in the presence of any others, no matter how pure—in any place, no matter how holy—and the process of death may be going on in the soul, in the society of the most lovely and holy, and near the very altars and in the temples of a holy God.

5. I add another thought under this head, to illustrate the importance of this faculty of the mind in the formation of character. It is, that all who attempt to corrupt the world, make their appeal in a great measure through it. Few, comparatively, are the appeals by the unprincipled and the vile to the reason of mankind, and still fewer to the conscience; but no one can estimate the number made to the fancy. They come to the soul when most plastic and tender, in the poetry that charms, and in the works of fiction in which every age, and our own eminently, abounds.

Unreal characters, scenes representing unreal life, and pictures of a

fancied world, are presented, to form the opinions and to invite the heart. The press groans under such productions, and there are millions of the young who commence their career with views and feelings that have been molded by those works of genius, rather than by any just conception of truth and of the realities of life. In all the works of poetry, also, there are gifted but guilty minds,

"Whose poisoned song  
Would blend the bounds of right and wrong,  
And hold with sweet, but cursed, art,  
Their incantations o'er the heart,  
Till every pulse of pure desire  
Throbs with the glow of passion's fire."

Probably, in all ages, if man was to be corrupted, the approach was to be made through the imagination. If unreal views of life are to be formed, if the passions are to be inflamed, if the thoughts are to be alienated from all that would elevate and sanctify—the appeal is to be made there. Philosophy affects the few, the creations of fancy the many. In looking over our own lives, it is probable that we can find but few bad influences on our souls which have not had their origin there; and for one corrupting appeal which has been made to the reason and conscience, a thousand have been made to the fancy. It is from considerations such as these, which might be indeed greatly expanded, that the importance of this faculty of the mind is seen in its relation to moral character. Its operations in any other respect do not appropriately fall in with this place and with the duties of this day. I proceed to our

II. Second object; to consider the influence of Christianity on this faculty. The inquiry is, what effect would be produced by bringing the mind under the fair influence of the gospel; by bringing "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." I observe,

1. In the first place, that religion gives sober and chastened views of things. It has to do with realities, and one object of the gospel is to fix the mind on those realities. It takes away the soul from scenes of fancied existence, and from the gay pictures which the mind has formed to a sober contemplation of what actually *is*, and what *is to be*. We shall inquire in another part of our subject whether it affords a sufficient range for the healthful exercise of this faculty; but the remark now is, that whatever range the mind is allowed under the gospel, is limited to what is real and true. It is contemplated that no effect is to be produced on the soul which the truth is not adapted to nourish and sustain. The *effect* of this on the soul of man can not but be vast, and as salutary as it is vast. Look at a few illustrations of it.

When Christ appeared on the earth to introduce his religion to the nations, the corrupt mythology of the heathen had peopled all the in-

visible world with imaginary beings, claiming the homage of man, and controlling his destiny. Gods and goddesses swarmed in the sky, in the waters, and on the land, and everywhere altars had been erected to propitiate their favor, or to deprecate their wrath. None of these were wholly pure; most of them were debased and sensual in the highest degree. At one stroke Christianity swept all these away, and annihilated all the power which these fancied beings had usurped over the soul. Instead of the multitude of gods, one God alone was revealed; instead of hosts of subordinate divinities with contending interests, and corrupt passions, demanding a temple and an altar in every village and every grove, and under every green tree, and a protecting image by every fireside, one great mediator was proclaimed to men offering a perfect sacrifice for sin, and rendering altars and oblations henceforward useless. Instead of the doubt which existed about the immortality of the soul, and the endless conjectures of the fancy about the future state, the undying nature of the soul was affirmed without ambiguity, and a heaven revealed of eternal purity. The creations of fancy that had thus been accumulating for ages, and that were modified by all that a corrupt imagination, or that conscious guilt could do, were thus swept away at once, and all their influence on the human mind, producing terror and superstition, and pollution, was stayed.

But look a moment at the influence of the gospel on the mind that has allowed itself to roam amid unreal scenes till now. To such a mind, when brought under the power of Christianity, life, once a trifle, becomes a momentous reality. It is not a dream, or a succession of fancied scenes; it is made up of hours and moments, each one of which in its rapid flight leaves an indelible impression on the soul; it is connected with facts that are of the deepest importance, and that have not one characteristic of a dream of the imagination; it is advancing to results boundless in their character and duration, where in the solemn realities the fancy itself wanders exhausted, and is lost. Life is a sober business of preparing for another world; the soul is to be saved; the crown of glory is to be won; sin is to be subdued; the passions are to be restrained and purified; death is to be met. These are sober realities; and to the Christian mind they have a solemnity and an importance which at once turns away the soul from day-dreams, and gives it occupancy in the severe and accurately-bounded visions of truth. Again:

When the mind is impressed with the importance of religion, all these things have the power over the soul of reality. The youth that dreams of future honor that shall satisfy, or of wealth that shall meet his wants, or of pleasures that shall have no alloy, knows, or may easily know, that it is a mere fancy sketch. There *have* been no such honors, or riches, or pleasures in this world, nor will there be; and it is very easy for any youth to certify himself of that fact. In none of those dreams of the fancy *are* we in fact so lost as to suppose them real, and a moment's

thought will break the whole charm, and dispel the illusion. But he who fixes his thoughts on heaven, feels assured that it *is* a most affecting reality. He believes there is no illusion about it. The charm of the contemplation is not dispelled by a return to the sober realities of this life, for they only serve to heighten the conviction of the superior grandeur and desirableness of that unseen world. The objects that now interest the soul are sober, rational, real; and the wandering mind is fettered down to what is real and what is true.

2. As a second illustration of the effect of the gospel on the imagination, I observe, that all the objects presented to the mind by it, are fitted to produce a pure and holy influence. There is not one that can be perverted to purposes of corruption, however long they may be contemplated, or in whatever forms they may be grouped or molded. Let us look back for one moment, at some of these objects which most excite the attention and interest of the Christian.

(a). Foremost in the things that attract his eye, and that win his heart, are the sufferings of the Redeemer. Now, in those sufferings in the garden of Gethsemane, and on the cross, there is all that could ever exist to give employment to a pure imagination. The Godhead of the sufferer—the union with human nature—the benevolence of his works—the views which he had of man—of God—of eternity—the scene in the garden—the silence of midnight—the sleeping disciples—the neighboring mount—the adjacent city—the approaching Roman band—the stealthful tread of the traitor—the angel ministering to the feeble human nature of the sufferer; and the scene on the cross—the darkened heavens—the earthquake—the rising dead—the Roman guard—the pressing throng—the eye, the brow, the tortured body of the Redeemer—all are circumstances on which the imagination may dwell, and with more engrossing power than any thing else that ever appealed to man. Yet here all is *pure*. It is impossible so to picture those scenes as to minister to a depraved fancy, or to be otherwise than a source of purity to the soul. When the mind wanders most; when the images before it are of a character least likely to sanctify; when the Christian allows his affections to rove most on forbidden things, one glance at the cross, one moment's contemplation of the scene in Gethsemane, checks all the wandering, and rebukes all this indulgence. The mind comes back to sober reality—to scenes of unequalled purity—and to places where we feel, and can not *but* feel, that no impure thought should be allowed to intrude.

(b). Again: when we think of heaven, the effect can not but be pure. A single moment's reflection will satisfy any one, that in the great account of that blessed world in the Bible, there is enough to give ample scope to all the conceptions of the most brilliant and discursive fancy. My remark now is, that all the conceptions of heaven which are based on the Bible, are fitted to purify the soul. The follower of Mohammed thinks of a heaven, the anticipation of which will minister to

every bad passion of his nature ; the heaven of the Christian is the abode of intelligent holiness. He dreams of no world where wealth will be the engrossing object ; where ambition will pursue its plans ; where the soul will be devoted to sensuality ; where there will be envy or malice, pride or corruption. In *his* heaven there are *two* elements ; first, *holiness* ; second, *knowledge* ; both ever advancing and expanding, and both having an ample field for indulgence and increase. He thinks of no friends there who are not holy ; of no employments which are not pure. The friends that he has parted with here, and that he expects to meet there, are those, and those only, who are renewed in heart, and whose sanctification, though but begun here, is made perfect there ; the new friendship that he expects to form there with those who have gone from our world, are with the excellent and good of all ages ; the new friendships with other beings are with those unfallen spirits who never had an impure thought or an unholy desire. The songs in which he will join are not those which inflame the passions ; the joys anticipated are not those which enfeeble the intellect or corrupt the heart. The God, in whose presence he is to be forever, is a pure and holy God ; nor does he anticipate a pleasure there which shall not promote the purity of his nature. Even in imagination the employments of heaven can not be made such as shall have an unholy influence on the heart. There may be much—we think it likely there *is* much in the common anticipations of heaven which will prove to be erroneous, and when we reach that world, we may find it far different from what we had pictured to our fancy ; but still, all the influence which it exerts is pure.

Correct or incorrect in the details, the only image that floats before the fancy of the Christian is *holy*. The beings that are there are holy ; the employments are pure ; the waters flow from crystal fountains ; the robes are white ; and the crowns are crowns of gold. And as often as the mind of the Christian can be raised from earth to heaven, it ascends above a world of sin and of corrupting illusions, like ascending from low plains, where are mephitic vapors, to mountain-tops, where the air is always pure. You may say that this is *mere fancy*. We will not quarrel about that ; let us agree on the one point—that he who presents a pure object, or group of objects, eminently attractive to the soul, all whose combinations are pure and holy, and which **NEVER CAN** be otherwise, has done something to break in upon the selfishness and corruption of the human heart.

I might go on to speak of other things in which the imagination of the Christian is concerned. I might speak of his conception of God ; of the death-bed scene ; of the anticipated reign of truth and piety in the world ; of the glories of that “illustrious morn” that shall break from the sky when the dead shall all arise ; but the subjects selected will present the general idea. Think, O Christian, when thy fancy roams on forbidden things ; when the objects of time and sense group themselves in

attractive combinations before thy soul ; when some unhallowed pleasure allures thy heart, and a charm almost resistless draws thee along to the place of worldly amusement ; when the power of early corrupt associations fills thy memory with polluted images ; think then of thy Redeemer in the garden or on the cross ; think of his agony and bloody sweat ; think of the crown of thorns, the bleeding hands, the mild, sweet, languid eye of the dying sufferer ; or think of heaven, of God ; of thy Saviour in glory ; of the shining ranks of seraphs ; of thy departed sister, child, that is there ; of the songs of praise that ascend around the throne. Let the influence of these scenes enter into thy soul ; and thou shalt feel that *thy* heart is not the place for impure images and corrupt imaginings.

3. My third and last illustration of the power of Christianity on the imagination will be derived from this consideration : that the objects which religion presents to the mind are just such as are adapted to the imagination as it is made by its Creator. There are two things which seem to be demanded in order that it shall accomplish the moral purpose to which it is adapted. The first is, that the objects which it contemplates should be *pure* ; the other is, that there should be sufficient obscurity in regard to them to give the most ample scope to its powers. It can not dwell on mere details ; it is not the faculty that finds its home in statistics ; its place is not the exact sciences. It has its starting-point in hints, and suggestions, and thought of truth, and then the wide range is before it, where it combines, and creates, and bodies forth unseen things to the view. I have adverted to the fact that Christianity has removed all the creations of the ancient mythology, and swept away the multitude of divinities with which a troubled conscience, or an impure fancy, had peopled the heavens. It has left a pure sky ; opened an immensity of worlds peopled only by holy beings ; thrown open the portals of heaven for the mind to range there ; and spoken of eternal employments and joys in that blessed world. The thought which I wish now to suggest, is, that while Christianity is based on facts, and while those facts are stated with the most accurate precision, and will bear the application of the severest laws of criticism, yet the *form* in which they are presented is just *as if* it were intended to make the most that is possible to be made of the imagination. Truth and holiness are the broad basis on which all is to rest ; but there is obscurity, there is grandeur, there is vastness, there is infinitude, on which the mind may range forever. Take, for example, what I have already referred to, the sufferings of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane, and on the cross. The narrative is simple and unaffected, as if written by a child. There is no mere rhetoric. There is not a word of astonishment ; there is not an attempt to excite the passions or to picture the scene. The circumstances of the narrative are so accurate and so minute that it seems almost as if there were an effort to give a mere dry detail, and as if the writers meant to

anticipate every objection, and to prevent the possibility of a suspicion that the account was forged, and yet the whole account seems just as if it were *designed* to leave as much for the imagination to supply as possible. Fewer words could not have been used in the description; and how the Saviour looked; what was the aspect of the heavens; what was the effect on the minds of those who witnessed these scenes—who is there that has not been disposed to ask of some one who knew? The resurrection of Jesus—the most solemn and grand event that has occurred in the world—entering into all the hopes of man, and shedding new light around the grave—how simple and short the account, and what a degree of obscurity rests upon it where the imagination may roam! The final resurrection of the just and unjust; the bursting of the graves, and the sea giving up its dead; a world on fire, and all the dead mounting up to meet their final judge—how simple the details in the Scriptures, yet what a field where the fancy may range. The employments of heaven; the everlasting joys there; the appearance of that world—how brief the details in the Scriptures; how almost tantalizing the statements; and yet what a field of glory! How sublime! How obscure!

How much to imagine—to think of—to desire; just *as if* it were *meant* to fill the mind, and to win the heart; to make all on earth appear little and mean, and to make us pant to break away from the clods that fetter us, and to go and know what there is there! There are, indeed, great landmarks set up along the future. The mind does not range without bound or limit. Light is thrown on a few distant objects, and the imagination is left to fill up all that is intermediate. We know we shall be holy; we know we shall see the Redeemer, and meet with the departed pious dead, and gaze upon the throne, and drink of the river of life, and sin and die no more. And with these great landmarks what a range of thought is there on which the mind may dwell! What a world! Just as if it were made for the flights of a pure and boundless imagination!

From our subject we learn,

1. The importance and value of early piety. It is in youth that the imagination is most active, and it is then that the most deep and permanent impressions are made upon the soul by its exercise. No young person can properly estimate the value of a pure fancy in regard to his future character, nor of the influences which he allows his mind to be subject to at that period of life. If the observation be correct which I suggested at the beginning of this discourse, that the imagination has more to do in forming the character than any other faculty of mind, then the importance of keeping it within the limits of purity, is at once apparent. Of all checks and restraints in regard to this faculty, none is so valuable as religion. Its objects are all pure; its influences are all holy; its tendencies are all heavenly. At the same time, as we have seen, its revela-



tions are just such as give the widest range to this faculty, and one presented in just the form at once to gratify and to elevate the soul. No youth can be injured by bringing his mind under the restraints of religion; there is no one who is certainly safe if he allows the mind to range without restraint, and the fancy to riot uncontrolled.

2. This subject is of great importance to the Christian. If the remark already made more than once, that the imagination enters deeply into the formation of character be true, then we see how directly this bears on the subject of Christian character and Christian peace. I address, probably, few, if any, who have passed the season of quite early life, who have not been materially and permanently injured by an improper indulgence of the imagination. In our anticipations of happiness in this world, in the associations which bind our thoughts now together; in our wishes and desires, and in the ordinary trains of thought which pass through the mind, our views are oftener formed under the guidance of this faculty than of any other. The improper indulgence of this faculty at some period of our lives, has left traces deep and dark on the soul, which nothing, not even religion, in this world will wholly obliterate, and which will attend us, though, if Christians, with diminished weakness, down to the grave. We have been injured, not by the decisions and promptings of conscience; not by the deductions of reason; not by the exercise of our own judgment; not by the advice of pious friends; but by the passage of the corrupt thought, leaving pollution behind it; by unreal views of what life is; by day-dreams of earthly bliss, and by allowing the mind to roam unchecked on forbidden pleasures. There our character has been injured, and the injury is so deep and abiding that it goes with us till we are made pure by that extraordinary change which is wholly to cleanse our souls when we die.

3. Finally. Christians may learn from our subject what is needful to be done to stay, as far as possible, the evils which have been already caused by a corrupt imagination. It is found in bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. It is not difficult to apply the remedy, and to make the soul eminently what it should be. Christian, when some corrupt image presents itself to the eye of thy mind, or comes, thou knowest not whence, or how, into thy heart, think then of thy Saviour, of Gethsemane, of Calvary. When the world presents itself with delusive attractions, and visions of happiness, in the gay circle and among the thoughtless and the vain, begin to charm thy heart, then think of brighter scenes in heaven; of thy everlasting home; of the crowns of gold and the harps of praise, and the shining ranks of the redeemed. Let not these visions of earthly bliss, or images of forbidden joys, dwell in thy mind and stain the purity of thy redeemed soul; but turn thy thoughts to thy Saviour—to his holy life, and his pure words; think of that eye, where purity always beamed, and of that heart, where no unholy thought found a home; think of the glories of the resurrection

morning, and of that world where no envious lip, or wanton eye, shall see or taste the bliss! The range of thy thoughts, like those of thy Saviour, is to be in a world of purity. Thou art to dwell not amid earthly and sensual pleasures, but hereafter with the pure seraphs above. Thou art to anticipate not the poor groveling, debasing, transient joys of this life; not the pleasures sought by the world in halls of splendor, and in dress, and song, and the banquet, but the joys of heaven. Let thy thoughts be there. Let the images that float before thy fancy come from that world. Fix thine eye, radiant with the anticipation of eternal purity, on the wonders of that heaven where are now the pure spirits, redeemed from this lower world; where are angels and archangels; where is thy Redeemer and thy God. Thus shall these wild, roving imaginings be checked and stayed; and hope, and faith, and love combine to keep steadily before thy soul the transforming image of a holy heaven.