

THE  
**SOUTHERN PREACHER :**

A COLLECTION  
OF  
**SERMONS,**

FROM THE  
MANUSCRIPTS OF SEVERAL EMINENT MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL,  
*RESIDING IN THE SOUTHERN STATES.*

CAREFULLY SELECTED FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS, WITH THE CONSENT AND  
APPROBATION OF THEIR RESPECTIVE AUTHORS.

TOGETHER WITH

**A FEW POSTHUMOUS SERMONS,**

FROM THE  
MANUSCRIPTS OF EMINENT DECEASED MINISTERS,  
Who, when living, had resided in the Southern States.

CAREFULLY SELECTED FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS,  
WITH THE CONSENT AND APPROBATION OF THOSE IN WHOSE POSSESSION THEY WERE  
FOUND.

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BY THE REV. COLIN M'IVER.

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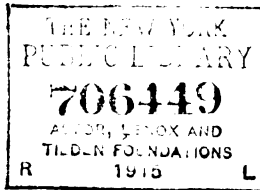
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.....  
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, } DISTRICT OF CAPE-FEAR,  
NORTH CAROLINA DISTRICT. } *To wit :*

BE IT REMEMBERED, that, on the 7th day of March, in the forty-eighth year of the Independence of the United States of America, A. D. 1823, the Rev. Colin M'Iver, of the said District, has deposited in this office, the title of a Book, the right whereof he claims as Proprietor, in the words following, viz :—

“The Southern Preacher: a collection of Sermons, from the Manuscripts of several eminent Ministers of the Gospel, residing in the Southern States. Carefully selected from the Original Manuscripts, with the consent and approbation of their respective authors. Together with a few Posthumous Sermons from the Manuscripts of eminent deceased Ministers, who, when living, had resided in the Southern States. Carefully selected from the Original Manuscripts, with the consent and approbation of those in whose possession they were found. By the Reverend Colin M'Iver.”

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, “An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned;” and also to an act entitled “An act, supplementary to an act, entitled an act, for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned, and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching. Historical and other prints.” Witness Carleton Walker, Clerk of the District of Cape-Fear.

CARLETON WALKER.

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## SERMON I.

ON THE PERFECTION OF THE DIVINE LAW.

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*MATTHEW V. 48.*

“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.”

**IT** has been sometimes thought, that the Scriptures contain a system of morals and religion, too perfect for our nature. Thence an argument has been deduced, that they could not have been derived from Heaven; as it is said, that it would be, in a proper sense, unreasonable for us, to be expected and commanded, to do that which is impracticable. Our Lord, in his Sermon on the Mount, certainly lays down a very strict standard of duty to his disciples. And he not unfrequently refers in one way or another to the perfection of God himself, for illustration of the sense in which he would be understood, and to enforce the authority and responsibility under which we lie for its fulfilment.

It is the opinion of Bishop Sherlock, that the words of the text, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect,” are to be limited in their application to the particular virtue which our Lord had just explained and inculcated. “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you.” And after some further illustration and



motive, he says, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." That is, let your love be comprehensive of all, as that of God is; and let it not be confined to a few only.

It is probable that the text may have been intended to have a particular bearing upon the charity which he had just explained. It is remarkable, however, that Christ, through the whole of this discourse, which will be said to be far above what man ever taught, or would have considered himself safe in teaching, exhibits to us a perfection truly divine. This is seen in the beatitudes first pronounced; in such a practice and profession of the Gospel, as should be a light to the world; in the fulness and completion of the law; in the spirituality and extent of it, against murder, adultery, false witness, and revenge. The same wonderful perfection, which strikes us as soon as uttered by him, but which none else would have ventured to enforce, appears also in the precepts respecting alms, prayer, forgiveness of trespasses, fasting, and in his remarks respecting the treasures of this earth, the perverting influence of these, and of a corrupt nature upon our judgments, set forth by the sound and disordered eye; in the supreme love of God, in resignation to his will, in trusting to his goodness, and in that cheerful spirit which denies itself to anxious and disqualifying cares about future evils. Lastly, the same perfection also runs through his other directions respecting our judgments upon others and ourselves, prudence in avoiding offences, importunity and filial trust in making known our requests to God, an unyielding purpose to shun the road of death though strowed with pleasures; and to chuse truth and life though it should place us alone, or among a number that should seem as nothing in comparison with a countless throng; in the knowledge of the tree by its fruits; and finally in the principles upon which men shall sink

under condemnation, or rise to eternal life in the day of judgment. If any one will attentively read over any of these rules of righteousness, purity and love, enjoined upon those who would be his followers and subjects, he will scarcely fail to say, as Jesus himself signified on another occasion—"Truly these are the laws of a kingdom which is not of this world." The language of them all, and not that only which explains the nature and extent of charity, seems to be, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father who is in Heaven is perfect." It is true, some of these laws relate to properties in our nature, and to objects, in respect to which we cannot be supposed to have any resemblance to the attributes or dispositions of the divine nature. But it will, probably, nay, assuredly be found upon thorough examination, with experience and undiverted reason for our guides, that there is not a precept given by Christ, which is not indispensable to the perfection and maintenance of those virtues in us, which correspond to the divine attributes. This might be shown in regard to all the particulars; but it will be sufficient to remark, with respect to the law of chastity, which may seem least of all to have a reference to any perfection in God, that the observance of it, is most intimately united with the purity, and with the worth and enjoyment of every virtue in the mind and in the heart.

Though it were supposed, then, that the text was enjoined by Christ, with immediate and primary application to our charity, to illustrate its comprehensiveness; yet, by the unqualified terms in which every command is delivered, showing us the most consummate perfection in all things, were it construed with a reference to all the other principles and doctrines he inculcates, we should only apply to them in a single expression, that which is conspicuously intended in the exposition of each. As to any argument respecting a supposed unreasonableness

in the Gospel, in demanding absolute perfection of such beings as we are, an extension of the construction to the whole of christian virtue has the same effect, as if it be confined to a single one ; since it would be as unreasonable to require of us, a divine perfectness in one, as in all, upon the principle on which such an objection proceeds.

It shall be my object in this discourse to show, that the law of our duty given us in the Scriptures, is perfect without abatement or qualification. In doing this, I shall first take notice of some apparent difficulties, which may furnish objections to the doctrine ; and then show the method of the Scriptures in removing these difficulties.

*First*—I am to take notice of some difficulties apparently furnishing objections to our being placed under a perfect law of righteousness.

It is objected, that if we be subject to much infirmity, and corrupt by nature, as the Scriptures declare, and as we shall acknowledge, it is implied, that we cannot fulfil a perfect law of charity, of justice, of self control, of purity from all mixture of sin, in thought, word, and action. And it cannot be rationally supposed, that God will command us to do that, which, in a strict sense, is to us impracticable. This, I believe, is the difficulty in its full force. From this, different persons would draw different conclusions. Some would say, that we are not to consider Christ, as actually intending to be understood, in the full sense of his expressions ; but only so far as our infirmity, and inevitable sinfulness, will permit us to go, in our obedience ; while others, declining this construction, would at once conclude, that the Scriptures, being thus obviously unreasonable, are not to be received as the word of God. The former of these opinions may be resorted to, by such as would still claim to be christians ; the latter is that of unbelief. Let us see whether the

difficulty be really as great, as it purports to be; and whether the conclusions to which it is supposed to lead, can be properly sustained.

That a law, or system of laws, may properly be entitled to the name, it must be explicit, and apply itself alike to all. It must give a full description of the duty to be performed, or of the action or sentiment which it forbids; for otherwise a misapprehension of it, and consequent transgression, might be chargeable to the vague sense in which the precept was delivered, and not to the intention or fault of the transgressor. But what definiteness could be given to the expression or the construction of a law, which should accommodate itself to human ability, or human weakness? If the degree of moral strength, for the fulfilment of the law, were precisely the same in all men, it might be supposed possible to frame the rules for the direction of our conduct, according to this degree. But is it not probable, may we not consider it as certain, that, diversified as the human race is, so that we might as easily find two, that were perfectly alike in their faces and their persons, as in the qualities and faculties of their minds, no law which should be fitted to one, would be proper for any other, that ever did or ever shall exist upon the earth? They, therefore, who complain of the perfection of the laws dictated to us as divine in the sacred Scriptures, and who insist that they must be accommodated to our weakness or depravity, before they can be considered as rational, ought first to show the possibility of what they approve and ask. Is it not evident, that a law must be prescribed for every individual, that it may be exactly suited to his peculiar dispositions and capacities, and become a rational law for his government and proper responsibility? Nay, must it not change continually even for each individual, since in no two successive years, might we not say months, or days, does the

moral strength of the same person continue precisely at the same standard? If a man improve in obedience and virtue, the law must advance to superior claims upon him, that his spiritual growth may not be at an end. But on the other hand, should he degenerate, and become hardened in guilt, and blinded in his moral discernment, the law too must descend with him, and abate its claims, lest it ask too much, for the depravity and moral weakness which he has contracted by the wickedness of his life. Is not all this too inconsistent, and almost too futile for our serious consideration? And yet it is the direct and necessary consequence of the plea we are so apt to hear, and which we ourselves also, are too prone to indulge in our own hearts, against the unconditional perfection of the commandment, delivered in the Gospel by Jesus Christ. The law of our duty then must be a perfect law. It must be such as the Scriptures themselves pronounce it to be, "holy, just and good." It must be the same for all; otherwise it would be subject to the charge of partiality, one of the most odious that is brought against an arbitrary and fickle government. It must be unchangeable, or it would be chargeable with caprice. Were it not both universal and immutable, it would not appear to result from the divine nature; it would indicate that God had not an essential and supreme regard for virtue, but that his attachment to it was so loose and versatile, that his justice would be without consistency; holiness would cease to be the standard of his attributes, and upon the steadiness of his government, no reliance could be placed. Whatever his creatures may become, in whatever circumstances they may be, the spirit of his laws must be the same to all, to angels, to glorified spirits, to men upon this earth, and to all rational beings in the various provinces of his creation. Should he cease to abide by this standard, the wicked would find a plea for

the extenuation of disorder and sin ; and thus an authority for them, so far as we can see, in the example and sanction, I would speak it with reverence, even of God himself.

But again, the Scriptures, as has been remarked, are disapproved, for demanding of us the practice of a law of perfect righteousness and purity ; or at least that construction is disapproved, which gives to them such a sense. But when such objections are raised, is it sufficiently considered what would be the consequence, if the Gospel were to proceed upon a different plan, and prescribe to us a virtue, which was evidently defective ; and defective it must evidently be, did it aim to be such only as we can practice ? Would not those, think you, who now find fault, some even so far as to deny the Scriptures to be the word of God, on account of their alleged unfitness, and superiority to our nature, then urge with equal earnestness, and certainly with infinitely greater advantage, that here was a law of human conduct and principle, professing to be declared from Heaven, when in the imperfection and deficiency of its provisions, and in the allowance it gave to sinfulness and corruption in us, it carried within itself, and bore upon its very face, the sentence of its own condemnation, as the result of human ignorance and depravity ? What answer could there be returned, were it asserted upon the authority of such an argument, that this also was another contrivance by its authors, to impose upon mankind, a pretended revelation, as *appears*, they would say, from the policy of consulting the passions, the prejudices, and the vices, of men ? That this is no groundless supposition, is proved by that, which actually occurred in the constructions of the Jews. John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a Devil. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold, a man glut-

tonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners ; but wisdom is justified of her children.

If this subject be dispassionately, and thoroughly examined, will it not be found, my hearers, that the difficulties, imagined to spring from the prescription of a perfect law of righteousness in the Scriptures, cannot furnish a proper reason for any other plan, implying accommodation to the weakness, the ignorance, or the sinfulness of our nature ? Is it not evident, that there is no standard, at which the corruption, and the inability of our race can be fixed, and therefore, no one system of laws can be fitted to it. If the demands of the law, were adapted to the lowest, the highest would have a moral excellence, beyond what the law of God would require. If it be proportioned to the strength of the individual, then the quantity of virtue which every one is to practice, must be left open, to his own vague and interested estimation, or else the sinner could derive no consolation or relief from such a rule, while the laws and government of God would fluctuate, with the degeneracy which his creatures might capriciously be willing to incur.

Have we not reason to apprehend, that we may not be disinterested in our feelings, towards this sacred volume, when consequences so striking result from the objections to which we eagerly and hopefully resort, against them ? Let us be willing to admit that this may be so, while in the *second* place we consider, whether the plan of the Gospel will not relieve the subject from every embarrassment. And while we consider it, let us not suppose that it is so vain an object, as the mere ascendancy in an argument, which we have in view. Were this all, my friends, to me it appears, that the time and pains employed in the discussion, would be spent to little purpose ; would

minister indeed to most unworthy purposes, instead of being fit to occupy your attention under the pretext of edification and spiritual improvement. Through the influence of the world, and the multitude of its objects, acting upon our senses, through our aversion to mingle with the succession of its instant amusements and gratifications, the serious considerations of virtue, religion, and immortality, we are apt to seize, and content ourselves with views so remarkably defective, and partial on these vast and momentous subjects, that in the first moment of their exposure, we easily take refuge in an entire levity, under the plea, that the subject is too gloomy and repulsive, to be permitted to interrupt and spoil the pleasures we are intent to enjoy; or to call into action the sober energy of the mind, that we may avoid the inconsistencies into which we have been betrayed. But let us consent, at some times, to dwell upon the reflection, to which religion is calling us, that this life cannot continue long to wear the aspect, which it now appears, so easily, to assume in our eye.

It will probably be found, if we will consent to divest ourselves of those limited, and interested views, which are suggested by our passions, and urged upon us by the world, that the Gospel alone, explains to us the conditions of our present life, and the principles upon which God can treat us, consistently, as subjects of his government here, and as looking forward to Salvation through his grace. We have seen some of the conspicuous difficulties in which we are instantly involved by a supposition, that God may give up the perfection of his laws, to devise and adopt a system, accommodated to our sinfulness and infirmity. Christ has told us, that he came not to destroy the law, but that one jot or one tittle should not pass from it, till all be fulfilled. And from the manner in which he lays down every precept, and sets aside



every gloss, and every contrivance of men, for detracting from its fulness, or weakening its force, there is reason to think, that it was his intention, to place it before us, as a perfect rule of duty; and to impress upon us, that it called for our obedience to its utmost demands.

Is it not apparent, too, that this was the doctrine which the Apostles taught, they having derived it from Jesus himself, and having ultimately enlarged their views, to a full comprehension and admission of it, both by his express declaration, and the inspiration of his spirit? "Do we then make void the law," saith the Apostle to the Romans; "God forbid; yea, we establish the law."

The law of God, then, is unchangeable in its obligation. No inability incurred by his creatures through transgression, can exempt us from its conditions. Have we all considered, how much is implied, in such a view as this? Is there one of us, who will lay claim to innocence, by a perfect fidelity and adherence to every principle of holiness and righteousness? Have our love, our fear, our faith, towards God, as our Creator, and Benefactor, been ever alive in our bosoms? Have we expressed them promptly, and piously, and fervently in our words and actions, upon all proper occasions, both private and public? Is there any sense, in which our allegiance to him has been cultivated and sustained, as to our Creator, our Preserver and our rightful Sovereign? Have we made it our object to find out his will, by all such means as might aid us, in arriving at it, putting them to a faithful proof, on account of the incomparable value of that knowledge? When in our dispassionate moments, we were convinced of the truth respecting his will, have we treasured up the wisdom in our hearts, and faithfully and cheerfully fallen in with its dictates? In discovering at any time, that we have evidently broken the law of our duty, have deserted the path of innocence, have with indifference or

enmity set ourselves to do evil, with a determined rejection of all prudent regard to the state of our own hearts, the influence of our example, the rights of others, or the authority of God, have we mourned in secret, and with a reforming contrition, over these evidences of our depravity, besought God, with heaviness of heart, a deep humility, and trust in his mercy, that he would pardon our offences and aid us effectually in our endeavours after a restoration to his favour? Have we never violated the dictates of our conscience, of reason, of the divine command, calling us to the habitual feeling, and practice of mildness, meekness, forbearance, and a forgiving disposition? And what shall we say respecting that unqualified perfection, in principle and practice, unfolded to us by Christ in his Sermon upon the Mount? Can we deny that here is a law of righteousness, which is strictly unimpeachable, not only calculated to make us better, but setting before us an indefinite improvement for our nature; showing us every virtue as it really is, properly binding upon us as intelligent beings, and worthy of God, who would purify us from our corruptions, raise us from the ruins of our fallen state; would fit us for the glories of his immediate presence, for solid enjoyment and prosperity here, and for the happiness of Heaven? When we look at these holy and unexceptionable rules of thought and conduct, can we endure the contrast between such perfection, and the picture of our life, which, our knowledge of ourselves, and of our fellow creatures, sets before our view? "When thou doest thine alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." Whosoever has had a lustful desire, is guilty before God. "Forgive us our trespasses, *as we forgive them* who trespass against us. If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remember that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave thy gift, first go and be reconciled

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“ to thy brother, then come and offer thy gift.” Not an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but “ love your  
 “ enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them  
 “ that hate you, and pray for them that use you despite-  
 “ fully and persecute you. That ye may be the children of  
 “ your Father who is in Heaven. For he maketh his  
 “ sun to rise on the evil, and on the good, and sendeth  
 “ his rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love  
 “ them who love you, what reward have ye ? Do not even  
 “ the Heathens the same ? Be ye therefore perfect, even  
 “ as your Father who is in Heaven is perfect.” Must  
 we not exclaim, in the contemplation of this sinless rec-  
 titude, this elevated and boundless charity, this goodness,  
 beaming with the glories of the Godhead, “ If thou Lord,  
 “ shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand ?  
 “ Enter not into judgment with thy servant. For in thy  
 “ sight shall no man living be justified.”

For the difficulties which occur from the perfection of  
 the divine law, and the weakness and sinfulness of our  
 nature, disqualifying us for a conformity with such a  
 standard, the Gospel furnishes the only satisfactory solu-  
 tion. He sent his only begotten Son into the world,  
 that whosoever believeth in him, may not perish, but  
 have everlasting life. Through the light of this mercy  
 we see the consistency of retaining the law in all the per-  
 fection of its principles and demands, with a deliverance  
 from the consequences of its transgressions, which are  
 inevitable by us. While God adheres to the holiness of  
 his nature, and speaks to us in the presence of the uni-  
 verse, in the same language of requirement as he does to  
 the most exalted beings who have never disobeyed his  
 will, he may now remit the sentence of our condemna-  
 tion, and offer us repentance, and restoration to his favour:  
 If it be asked, can he do this, without relinquishing his  
 claims upon our universal obedience, and incurring that

desertion of his justice, which is implied in bending his laws to our inability? the answer is, that all this is fully and gloriously attained in the redemption through Christ. If this be rightly understood, it furnishes no encouragement to sin, by a previous proffer of indulgence; while the guilt we contract through our incapacity for the fulfilment of a perfect righteousness, may still have an animating assurance of pardon, because it has proceeded from a degeneracy incurable by us, exposing us justly, and but for such a method of recovery, inevitably too, to final depravity and its hopeless miseries.

*Now*, if we ask for the privilege of repentance, it may be granted, without detracting from the perfection of God's justice, or placing his precepts at the caprice of the transgressor, or encouraging such of his creatures to a trial of disobedience, as have never failed in their truth to his will. In the Gospel alone, such a dispensation as this is unfolded to our view. These, fellow Christians, are not mere words of course, proceeding from professional interests and prejudices. They invite and challenge your most serious, and scrutinizing, and experienced consideration. You see men rejecting them long, with the same sentiments of disregard, which you may possibly feel, and yet at last acknowledging them in all the force which this sacred volume ascribes to them, in the explication of our condition as sinful creatures, and as hoping for reconciliation and acceptance with God. God forbid, that such may not be the result with you. But why should I speak of future time? Is not the whole system of ideas which the Gospel combines and presents to us more free from difficulty than any elsewhere derived, respecting such abatements of the divine law, as shall proportion its demands to so indefinite a standard, as our ability and our affections, and the force which temptation may be supposed to exert upon us? If Christ in the

Gospel calls upon us to fulfil the law of God in its perfection, we do not understand him aright, if this appear to us a hard or unreasonable demand, or if it seem calculated to drive us to despair. He sets before us the perfect nature, and the immutable principles of the divine government, only to make us acquainted with our true condition, by the light of that perfection to which we must be brought, if we ever be qualified for the favour of God, and the happiness of Heaven. The law of God is thus displayed, that we may be prepared to understand and acknowledge the value of that unspeakable mercy which is unfolded, in the plan of redemption, through the Son of God. Can we not fulfil the righteousness of the law? What then shall be the result of this conviction? Shall it be to make us deny the reasonableness of that authority which imposes it, and thus to make us revolt even against God, or reject all the evidences of his revealed will? Or, shall not the result rather be such as accords with the conviction, the humility, and the repentance which he expressly declares to be essential to our salvation, and to which he encourages and urges us by the blessing he pronounces upon them? "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven." "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted." How, then, are the blessings here declared to be understood, except through the condemnation under which we lie, by the law of God, a deep sense of our moral guilt, and a conviction, that without the mercy of God extended to us, through Jesus Christ, we are without hope? The atonement which Christ was to make for sin upon the Cross, the obedience he was to pay in our stead, furnish the true solution of the mystery which appears in his pronouncing precepts, which imply no relinquishment in God, of the full perfection of his laws. Not indeed, that this relinquishment, could have been

consistently admitted by him, had no such method of satisfaction to his broken law been adopted by him ; but that without this satisfaction, we must have been forever excluded from the hopes of restoration, from the effects of sin ; must have continued forever under the righteous anger of God.

Consider then the true object for which the law is now revealed and enforced, both moral and ceremonial. It must, as the Apostle tells us, be now considered, not as a means of Salvation, as though we could, by our obedience, lay claim to its rewards ; but as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

If the law cannot consistently abate its requirements ; if we can have no pretensions to fulfil its conditions, what remains, but to admit the truth respecting our ruined and helpless state, to consider the vast distance at which we stand from the wisdom of the Gospel, from perfect rectitude, from fitness for Heaven ? Is it not evident that if we be left to our own strength alone, this distance is as impassable, as the gulph which divides Heaven from Hell ? What prospect is there, except through the mercy of God, combined with the resources of his wisdom, that we can be renewed to the capacities of obedience, or delivered from the condemnation necessarily connected with the inherent corruption of our nature, and the practical depravity of our lives ?

The pride of human nature objects to the Gospel, because it magnifies the wickedness of the human heart. This it appears to do by presenting to us a perfect law of righteousness, and shewing us the contrast of our degeneracy. It does this, by setting before our view, the holy character of God, and his justice in requiring the penalty due to the violation of every duty. It does this also in exhibiting the incarnation, the sufferings, the perfect obedience, and the great mysterious sacrifice of Jesus

Christ, the Son of God, which he offered in his own body for sin upon the Cross. If all this be true, who shall say that the evil of our transgressions is not great, and no longer to be palliated or denied? If in all this the Scriptures declare no more, than what has actually occurred, then indeed, without repentance, and faith, and renovation of heart, we can have no hope towards God; but we must resign all our pretensions to the virtues in which we fondly repose our confidence; and the complete humiliation which the Gospel claims from us, under a sense of our unworthiness of any thing, but God's righteous anger, must be the first act by which we can look for pardon and acceptance.

If, my hearers, we claim the privilege of being imperfect, with a plea, that a blameless obedience is impracticable to us, consider, and say, might not I, or you, or any other mortal, like ourselves, venture to promise the ratification of the privilege, provided you will define, with a precision not to be mistaken, the limit at which the plea shall stop, and be no further urged? If God were to offer you this day, in explicit terms, to be fulfilled with the unfailing fidelity of his truth, the privilege of tracing out the extent of obedience, within which you should finally be an heir of Heaven, and without which you should be an heir of Misery, do you think, while you were thus choosing for yourself, you could possibly feel safe, while you retained one principle of moral rectitude, as prescribed by the law of God, to be a ground, on which you could with safety be finally judged? Were God to offer exemption from the consequences of all the sins you ever committed, upon the condition that you should be able to select one action unexceptionably good, from all the actions of your past life, consider and say, would you have any assured trust, that you would be saved from the final misery which should await your

failure to fulfil such terms, liberal as they would be? What, then, shall be the limit, I repeat, to which we, thankless, and inconsiderate, and presumptuous mortals shall confine our demands of indulgence in sin?

Were I to address a few words to the young upon this occasion, the subject is not without sentiments peculiarly appropriate to you. You, my young friends, are professedly, and conspicuously engaged in the pursuit of all that may give perfection to your character. To give you perfection? you may ask. Yes, it is the object of education to impart every qualification, which may fit you to act your part with the utmost efficacy, with a view to usefulness, and true honour, and dignity, and consistency among your fellow men. It is its object to present you to your friends, to society, to your country, and to the world, as good relations, good neighbours, good patriots; and every talent, and all knowledge, and all skill, are but little understood, if this be not considered their end. But how shall the endowments of the mind, and all personal qualifications, have the greatest assurance, and the most essential aids given them for the accomplishment of these purposes, but through the influence of an unfailing principle of rectitude? If you have not yet laid it down as a certain truth, you have yet to learn, and the world will practically teach it to you, that the only basis upon which you can efficiently build up a structure of merit, and excellence, and happiness, in personal qualities, that shall recommend you to God and man, is the reformation of the heart, with an understanding enlightened and directed by a moral system, that will never be the advocate of sin, in whatever captivating or imposing form it may offer itself. Such a system is to be found, I know not where, if it be not exhibited to us in the life and the discourses of Jesus Christ, and in the doctrines and principles of his kingdom.



It is not to be imagined that Christians lay claim, God forbid that they should be so ignorant and presumptuous as to do it, to an actual attainment of the perfection to which they are called.

Hear what one of the greatest models which Christianity ever produced in our nature, has said of himself. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect. But this one thing I do, forgetting those things, which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things, which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

This is the great scope of the Gospel; in this is its superior excellency. It gives us the perfect system of moral principles; it calls us to the persevering pursuit of this in the present life; it alone furnishes us the means by which we can successfully advance; it provides for our deliverance from the consequences of sin, and it raises us, at length, to the glory and perfection of Heaven.

It is only in the correct views of the Gospel, in repentance of sin, in habitual converse with God, and in a life habitually governed by the precepts and maxims of God's holy word, that the perfection to which Christians are called, consists; at this perfection, we should be continually aiming; and if we are Christians indeed, then it will follow, that, "*whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, or if there be any praise,*" we will "*think of these things and do them.*"