

HISTORICAL
AND
PHILOSOPHICAL CONSIDERATIONS
ON
RELIGION;

ADDRESSED TO

James Madison, Esq.

Late President of the United States.

By Rev. **JOHN H. RICE, D.D.** *R*

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P R E F A C E.

THE Considerations on Religion presented in the following pages are already known, to some extent, in this community. The most of them appeared originally in the columns of a religious newspaper, during the year 1830. In that form they were received by many with marked approbation. They were seized and read with avidity as they came from the press; copious extracts were copied into other religious journals, and, in that mutilated form, extensively circulated. While detached portions of them were thus scattered abroad through the country, demands were repeatedly made for their republication. In compliance with requests of this kind, and with the consent of the author, the re-printing of them was commenced—although he had but just entered the extensive field of observation which he intended to survey. Those who follow him as far as he proceeded, will regret that he was not permitted to finish the work, and to offer the public the results of his inquiries on the numerous and highly interesting questions embraced in its plan. But while prosecuting it in his moments of rest from effort in the great enterprises of christian benevolence, to which his life was devoted, he was taken from us—called from earth to heaven, to enter on higher services in the kingdom of his Lord and Master.—In the mean time the re-printing was suspended—and since his removal, other labors of the editor have occa-

sioned a delay of several months in preparing the work for the public.

It was the author's intention to permit these numbers, when completed—if they survived the fate of most newspaper essays—to make their way in the world without a name, supported only by the estimation in which they might be held by the intelligent public. They were communicated to the editor confidentially, and published as contributions from an unknown writer; and proper means were used to conceal the authorship. But it was impossible for the writer to appear on the subjects discussed in this volume, without being known. By those who had read other essays from his pen, he was immediately recognized in these. As he was known by his work to this community, the editor has considered his instructions on this point no longer obligatory, and has thought it obviously proper to prefix his name to it. This circumstance cannot lessen its value in the view of those who are partially acquainted with its contents, and it will, no doubt, introduce it to others who will be richly rewarded for the time and labor of a perusal.

The views presented in this volume—though not completed according to the author's plan—are too valuable to be lost. The principles which are happily and forcibly illustrated, in the progress of the work, are of general and permanent interest. They lie at the foundation of religion; they take hold on man as a religious being, show him his nature, condition, duty, and happiness, and

instruct him in the use of means adapted to promote the great interests of mankind. An acquaintance with these principles in their various bearings on morals, on whatever affects the welfare of society, cannot fail to contribute to the growth and perfection of christian character. The order and connexion in which they are presented, and the arguments that support them, are marked with originality and clearness. Others may have seen and defended the same general truths, but not in the various relations in which they are illustrated in this work. In the author's philosophy on the topics discussed, the reader will find no fruitless speculation, no idle or amusing theory; his philosophy is that of practical religion, enforcing its duties with divine sanctions—a philosophy replete with lessons of wisdom, formed from a knowledge of human nature, of man as *he is*, and of God, veiled in transcendent perfections, as he *is revealed* in the Bible.

The views of the author in his reasoning on man as a being, from whom religion of some kind is inseparable, as a *religious* being, so constituted by the structure of his moral and intellectual nature, exhibit with great force the authority of that law which requires him to be *truly* religious. His remarks on the striking differences in the kinds of religion which have prevailed among professed christians, show the supreme importance of that which addresses itself to reason, which enlightens and sanctifies conscience, and regulates its decisions in accordance with the laws of God. His statement of the

great principles of Religious Imposture, and the objects to which they were obviously adapted, removes the covering which so long concealed from vulgar eyes the works of "the mystery of iniquity,"—and shows how sadly the richest and best gift of Heaven has been perverted and corrupted to make it subservient to the selfish ends of politicians and priests. The evils of bigotry and sectarianism are sketched with fidelity, not as the fruits of religion, but as the abuses of it, or rather as developments of ignorance and depravity, very partially enlightened, which can only be effectually removed by the regenerating influences of the Spirit of truth, imprinting as it were the moral features, the very impress, of christianity on the heart and character.

The numbers on Religious Liberty and the means of preserving it, are invaluable. The discussion and defence of its principles, is, at this time the more important, on account of the circumstances which are modifying the character of religion in all civilized nations.—Religious liberty is confessedly in its infancy. It had no place or existence among the religions of the ancient world. Unknown in every period among Pagans and Mahometans, it is, in fact, the offspring of christianity—and nothing but genuine christianity, stripped of the robes, and honors, and forms, and rites, and prelatical powers, in which worldly ambition has clothed it, can support, diffuse, and perpetuate the spirit and principles of religious freedom. In this country alone, of all christendom, are these principles maintained unimpair-

ed. The vast majority, then, of christians have been reared and educated under the influence of ecclesiastical systems, which have made them blind to the importance of religious liberty, or, perhaps, hostile to its existence on earth. Its true friends are but a small minority: And yet the purity of religion—the full development of its influences in regenerating the heart—in sustaining its own divinity unimpeached—its progress in the world—its victories in destroying sin—its triumphs over the cruel superstitions which have oppressed and degraded three-fourths of the human race, and the extension of its redeeming power over all the nations and tribes of the earth, reflecting upon them the spirit and light, and glories of Heaven—all are inseparable from the existence of religious liberty. *It must* live—its spirit *must* be diffused, whatever powers may conspire to oppose it, for it is indispensable to the accomplishment of the plan of the founder of christianity. How important, then, that its principles should be known and understood; that its cause should be defended before the world; and that the imposing logic and sophistry of its enemies should be refuted and exposed.

But it is not necessary to enlarge on this point. The importance of perfect liberty of conscience to the purity of religion and to its extension in the world, is generally acknowledged—and the subject is ably illustrated in the closing numbers of this work. And these were among the last literary efforts of the esteemed and lamented author. As such they will be viewed with sacred pleasure by his

numerous friends. He had laid the foundation—he had proceeded thus far in rearing a structure, fortified with truth, for the defence of the liberty of the sons of God. His plan was before him in all its parts—his mind was full of it, and rested upon it, when he was no longer able to pursue it. To the numbers here introduced to the reader, it was his purpose to add several or many more, illustrating the principles and tendencies of the institutions which christian benevolence has reared to enlighten and evangelize the world. But from this work, and from other christian enterprises in which the energies of his mind and heart were enlisted, he was called by his Master to his rest and reward. For us, instead of repining, or indulging regret that he was not permitted to complete the works which he commenced for the honor of the Redeemer and the salvation of men, it is more proper to bless the name of the Lord for the good effected by his instrumentality, and especially for the institution he founded, destined to bear an important part in converting the world; and to say with true submission to the divine will “*even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.*”

A. CONVERSE.

Richmond, Va. June 1, 1832.

CONTENTS.

	<i>Page.</i>
Dedication addressed to James Madison, Esq.	3
No. I.	
Why do all intelligent writers, in delineating the character of a Nation, think it necessary to give an account of its Religion? - - - -	5
Man by the constitution of his nature, a Religious being, - - - - -	<i>Ib.</i>
Religion a principle of vast energy, - - -	7
No. II.	
Is it possible to exterminate religion—and would it be wise to attempt it? - - - - -	9
Religious susceptibilities can not be eradicated,	11
Antagonist principles of human nature,	12
A decline of religion always attended with a decline of virtue and patriotism, - - - - -	14
No. III.	
Is there any difference of great importance between the different kinds of religion? - - - -	15
The principles of human nature to which Religion may be addressed, - - - - -	16
A Christian character described, - - - -	18
The superstitious religionist, - - - -	19
The Enthusiast, - - - - -	20
The Fanatic, - - - - -	21

No. IV.

How are the important differences in the religion of Christians to be accounted for? - -	22
The cultivation of the conscience highly important,	25
The transmission of moral influences, - -	26

No. V.

Principles of the great Religious Imposture, -	28
Devices adopted to gain ecclesiastical power,	31
Liberty of Conscience the great principle of the Re- formation, - - - -	33

No. VI.

Bigotry and Sectarianism, - - -	35
Sectarianism defined, - - - -	36
Plan of the Founder of Christianity, -	37
Good resulting from sectarianism, - - -	38
Evils of sectarianism, - - - -	39
Not chargeable to true religion, - - -	42

No. VII.

Necessity of Religious Liberty—Brief sketch of its history—Present state in this country, -	43
Religion must be perfectly free to ensure to a commu- nity its benefits, - - - -	44
Religion must be free to preserve it from corruption,	45
Religion must be free to produce its appropriate effects on the community, - - - -	48

No. VIII.

History of Religious Liberty, - - -	50
Able advocates of religious liberty, - - -	56
Suspicious and reproaches against its friends, -	58

Zeal of unbelievers for liberty of conscience,	59
Something like a plan to establish Infidelity,	- 61

No. IX.

Means of preserving Religious Liberty,	- - 62
Simplicity in religious worship,	- - 65
Correct views of Christian doctrine important for the preservation of religious liberty,	- - 68
A recognition of the sufficiency of the Scriptures and their distribution important means of preserving religious freedom;	- - - 74

No. X.

To preserve religious liberty, the government of the Church must be in the hands of the People,	79
How the ministers of Christianity may accomplish all the good which its founder intended,	- - 81
How clerical power has been assumed,	- - 82
Character of the Clergy of the United States,	86
Sound intellectual and religious education an important means to preserve religious liberty,	- - 89
Neglect of the religious discipline of the young—a species of treason to the country,	- - 91
Character and objects of the American Sunday School Union,	- - - 93

No. XI.

Intellectual training of Religious Teachers,	97
Influence of enlightened and faithful teachers of Christianity,	- - - 101

No. XII.

Plans for the education of ministers,	- - 106
Advantages of Theological Seminaries,	- 107

HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON RELIGION.

ADDRESSED TO JAMES MADISON, Esq.

Late President of the United States.

SIR,—Although personally an entire stranger, I have ventured to address the following pages to you. Two reasons have determined me to take this step. First, because I cherish a very high respect for your character as a man; and a lively gratitude for your important services as a citizen; and I know of no other way, in which I can, with equal propriety, express my feelings.—Secondly, because the subject on which I write, is often treated, either with great neglect, or with undue warmth. And it occurred to me that your venerated and venerable name might both excite attention, and repress vehemence; I should not have presumed, however, to bring you before the public in this manner, had I not been permitted to observe you in the late Convention of Virginia, and to see in you the same firm, enlightened, and dignified friend of rational liberty, that you showed yourself to be, forty years ago, in that celebrated convention, which after a most able discussion, ratified the Federal Constitution.

The subject of the following essay, is, according to my full conviction, one of the utmost importance. Such is its influence on all human affairs, that it cannot be too carefully considered. That this influence may be felt in all its salutary efficiency, it is indispensably necessary that religion should be free. It was principally your agency,

which carried the "Act for securing religious liberty," through the Legislature of Virginia in 1785.—And as one important object of the following papers is to shew how the freedom, which we now so happily enjoy, may be perpetuated.—I trust that you will pardon the presumption of incrimbing these papers to you.

With best wishes, that your life may be prolonged, and your happiness continued,

I am, most respectfully,

Your unknown fellow-citizen,

THE AUTHOR.

NO. I.

Why do all intelligent writers, in delineating the character of a nation, think it necessary to give an account of its religion?

Because all intelligent readers require it. They feel that they do not understand the character of a people; that they cannot enter into their thoughts; ascertain their principles; or make safe calculations as to their course of action, without some acquaintance with their religion.—It makes no difference, whether the subject of inquiry, is man in *savage* or *civilized* life; whether he lives in France or Tahiti, in England or New Zealand. We cannot comprehend the politics, or even understand the history of any nation, without some knowledge of its religion.

A general answer to the question before us, then, may be given in the following terms. RELIGION IS UNIVERSAL—it belongs to *human nature*, as much as reason or passion.—It existed among Romans, Greeks, Egyptians, Persians, Gauls, Germans, Britons, Scythians: It exists now among English, French, Russians, Turks, Chinese, Hindoos, Polynesians, and Hottentots. No nation or tribe is found destitute of it. On this subject, the evidence is such as to warrant the conclusion, that if, in any particular individual, the religious faculty has not been developed, it is an irregularity, not at all more surprising, than the want of development in the faculty of reason; or the absence, in some cases, of certain appetites and passions. The truth is, that man is, by the *constitution of his nature*, as much a religious, as he is a reasonable being. And if education and discipline are necessary to bring out, and direct the faculties of the one order; they are equally necessary to accomplish a similar object in those of the other.

I have not thought it necessary to form a long induction to establish the fact stated above; because this would imply, in many readers, a degree of ignorance of the history of man, which I am unwilling to admit.

But in the next place, religion adds to this character of universality, that of vast and, often, uncontrollable energy.

And in proof of this position, I appeal to the testimony of History. They, who have directed the affairs of the world, have generally felt it to be, either their duty or their interest, rather to sustain than destroy the interests of religion. In every civilized nation now on earth, with one exception, religion is established by law; and in all savage tribes, it has the support of *custom*, more powerful than *written* law. The case has been the same among ancient nations, for a time so long, that "no *record* of man runneth contrary thereto." When the author of christianity made his appearance in the world, he found religion, in different forms, established in the whole civilized world.

That this was the case in his own country, no one will doubt. It is equally certain that it was so, in the vast extent of the Roman empire. Every school-boy who has read the Latin Classics, knows, that no decree of the Senate was valid, unless passed in a place consecrated by the Augurs; that nothing important either in peace or war was determined without consulting the priests; that in the earliest age of the commonwealth, public funds were set apart for the support of the ministers of religion; and that these were from time to time increased according to the pleasure of the government. It is well known, too, that however strangers might be *tolerated* in the practice of a foreign superstition, no Roman citizen could profess any religion but that of the state, without incurring the most fearful penalties. The case was the same in the Grecian republics; and "the lives of Æschylus, Anaxagoras, Diagoras, Protagoras, Prodicus, Socrates, and Alcibiades, demonstrate that neither genius, courage, learning; nor the softer virtues, if uncombined with the superstitions of the age, could screen their professors from the persecutions of an implacable priesthood." *From the earliest periods of profane history to the commencement of the Christian Æra, there was no such thing known in the world as RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.*

It is, moreover, unquestionably true, that in all the civilized nations of the ancient world, religion was supported at very great expense both of time and money. The *holy days* were much more numerous among the Greeks and Romans than among protestant christians.— It would be tedious to enumerate all their different classes of priests, and different kinds of sacrifices. Temples and chapels were in greater number than churches in any country of christendom. And their magnificent ruins remain, to this day, the wonder and admiration of the world. Who can calculate the cost of that Temple, the fragments of which are all that time has spared of Palmyra, the splendid city of the desert?

From these facts, I derive the conclusion, that Religion is a principle of *mighty efficiency in prompting the actions and directing the conduct of men*. If it were not so, men of keen discernment, and great political sagacity, such as the Greeks and Romans, would not have employed it, during many successive centuries, as an instrument of government.—The contrary supposition is utterly incredible.

But this inference may be strengthened by many very striking instances in the history of man. The use made of Religion in the administration of the Roman Government, as already stated, is familiar to every reader of history. The politicians, who established christianity, on the decline of heathenism, acknowledged, with one voice, the *power* of religion. The ability of the first Roman emperor is not more conspicuous in any thing else, than in his assumption of the office of *pontifex maximus*. He knew well that his invincible legions could not sustain him on the throne, without the influence of religion.—The genius of christianity forbids measures of this kind; and the successors of Constantine were harassed and disturbed by the fierce contentions of rival bishops. These shameful disturbances, which Gibbon details, prove, most abundantly, that religion takes hold of the human heart with a power, which it is hard to resist.

It was the influence of the same principle, under high excitement, which, during the eleventh and twelfth centu-

ries, caused six millions of persons *to take* the cross, and precipitated half that number on the shores of Asia, with the design of rescuing the Holy City from the hands of the infidels.

It was the power of the religious principle, which established a modern Rome, a more absolute and frightful despotism over the civilized world, than ever has been exercised by any civil government.

And to descend from general statements to particular cases, it was religion which sustained the martyr, when exposed to wild beasts, or broiled on a gridiron, under the authority of the Cæsars; or when broken on the wheel, or roasted at the stake at the bidding of the holy fathers.

But this subject will not be fully before the reader's mind, unless he should consider the *extent* to which the influence of religion reaches. The history of the world shews that it mingles with the politics of all forms of government; and the administration of all public affairs. It amalgamated itself with the institutions of republican Greece and Rome, and with the Assyrian and Persian despotisms. And at this day, it holds in check the daring spirit of Mahmoud, it controls the movements of the autocrat of all the Russias—it modifies the political institutions of France and England—it agitates poor, distracted Ireland, and its power is felt, both for good and for evil, in our own republic. It permeates, too, entirely through domestic and social life.—We feel its influence in associating with our neighbors. It affects our wives and children. It descends to our servants.—And among them all, it may be either a gentle spirit, breathing meekness and patience, and good will; or a dark, incorrigible, fierce fanaticism, blighting all that is fair, and defacing all that is lovely in human nature.

But come in what form it may, it is a potent spirit:—it is a principle of mighty power: Or to borrow a remark which I have heard, “it is the electricity of the moral world;—in equilibria diffusing a healthful and vigorous stimulus through the whole nature of man; but when excited and misdirected, producing tornadoes and earthquakes,” which work the desolations of a century in a single moment.

The religion of a nation then is, and it ought to be a subject of the deepest interest. Intelligent foreigners look with much solicitude on the *religion of the United States*. It is particularly with regard to this great affair, that they contemplate with irrepressible anxiety the grand experiment now in process, in our country. Why should any of our *wise* and *great* men, think the subject unworthy of their attention?

NO. II.

Is it possible to exterminate religion—and would it be wise to attempt it?

It was remarked in the preceding No. that religion belongs to man's nature—that it is a part of his constitution. If so, none but the power which made us, can annihilate our religious faculties. If any peculiar and extraordinary excitement should for a time abolish the sense of religion, it will, sooner or later, return.

Expellas naturam *furca*, tamen usque recurret: And it will *recur*, with a force proportioned to that which effected its temporary expulsion.

Some, however, appear to entertain a different opinion. I have therefore thought it proper to institute and pursue the inquiry stated above. But it ought to be understood, that if christianity were destroyed, religion would still exist in the world. If any hate both the name and the thing, they assuredly ought not to vent the whole of their dislike on the Bible. Why should christianity be singled out, as the sole object of unappeasable hatred?—And why should *priests* be an everlasting theme of reproach?—There can not be priests without religion. And if it is a mere invention of designing men, who were the inventors? Beyond a doubt, *politicians* must bear the guilt of this sin. They first made priests if the thing originated in cunning.—But religion must have existed before it could have ministers. The contrary supposition is absurd. We see, then, how inconsiderate are the censures often thrown out on religious teachers.

The principal object, however, of these preliminary remarks is to show, that all religion is not connected with the Bible. Some philosophers have imagined that the population of parts of the world,—the south sea islands, for instance—cannot be accounted for consistently with the Mosaic history of the creation. Most certainly, the inhabitants had never heard of the Bible, until it was carried to them by the missionaries. Yet they had their deities, their priests, their sacrifices. Whence did they obtain them? The aborigines of America had a religion, which they did not learn either from Moses or Christ. This is true, indeed, of nearly three-fourths of the entire population of the world. Unless christianity, then, can be proved to be the worst of all religions, it surely ought not to be most vehemently opposed!

But does it at all comport with philosophical truth to suppose, that religion, instead of being founded in the nature of man, has been superadded by the craftiness of designing politicians? How has it happened then, that in every nation ancient and modern, civilized and savage, the same expedient has been adopted; and the same general principle, however varied in form, has been applied to the same object? If there is nothing in the constitution of man's nature, which makes him a religious being, can the anti-religious philosophers give any satisfactory account of these unquestionable facts?

It is patient and careful observation which teaches us what belongs to man's nature, and what is adventitious. That which is found in all forms of human society, in all ages, in all climates, and under every variety of circumstances, does assuredly belong to the constitution of human nature. We have seen that this is the case, with religion. And hence we believe that the attempt to destroy it would be fruitless.

I will grant to Mr Robert Dale Owen, or any of his disciples, that the *power of circumstances* is very great. Or, to express the same truth in words long ago applied to the subject, there is a *mighty influence in education*. But can it *create* or *destroy*? Can it, indeed, do any thing more than *modify*? Under the training of Aristotle,

Alexander, with Homer in his hand, or, under his pillow, conceived the project of conquering the world. But, however wide the range of ambition in the son of Philip, did it burn with a fiercer flame, than that which is kindled in the bosom of the red man of the wilderness, when he goes out to battle, with his chosen warriors? So of all the *principles of action* in man.—They are modified, the direction of their influence is determined, by circumstances.—But the principles are deeply founded in the nature of man, and cannot be eradicated.—*The attempt is unwise.*

But the folly of this effort, may be made apparent in another way. The history of man shows how destructive and ruinous is the warfare which is sometimes carried on against nature. The effects of *ascetic* institutions afford at once illustration and proof of this remark. One main object of those establishments is the destruction of that passion, which is the foundation of marriage. But it is well known, that the result has been, in every case, the perpetration of many most foul and monstrous crimes. So that it may well be doubted, whether promiscuous concubinage, or monastic institutions, as far as their influence has extended, have been most productive of vice.

The extreme rigour of parental discipline, sometimes exercised by well meaning but mistaken people, has often brought utter ruin on very promising children.

The attempt to exterminate religion is rebellion against nature, and opposition to some of her most powerful principles. The world has witnessed but one great, combined, systematic effort of this kind:—and the effects afford a lesson, which ought never to be forgotten. Unbounded selfishness, uncontrollable licentiousness, and ferocious cruelty, marked that epoch in the history of a nation. What else could have been expected? Man regarded his fellow, as a being of to-day, and no to-morrow—No omnipresent witness, no righteous judge, no future reckoning, laid any restraint on the passions. No acknowledgment of man's immortality invested him with one dignity, or rendered his life of more value, than that of a brute. No sanctity clothed his domestic relations. The record of the time is written in blood. The stain is yet on the es-

catcheon of Infidelity; and the waters of an ocean cannot wash it out.—But it was impossible that such a state of things should endure. *Religion returned—POPERY was restored; and the ORDER of JESUITS was re-established!*

After all, however, some modern reformers suppose that by beginning in time and conducting general education on strictly, philosophical principles, religion may be eradicated without any very violent convulsions. A new regeneration is taught by these new instructors. We must be born again of the *flesh*, and not of the spirit. At any rate, some among us wish to make the trial: and seem willing to risque the consequences. But, can *they* be acquitted of extreme rashness, who are ready to try experiments on human happiness? By what means soever, religion may have been implanted in man, it has shot its roots through all the forms of society, and the departments of life, and it cannot be torn up, without loosening and tearing up with it, every valuable institution of man.

But do these modern teachers know, that the complicated machinery of human nature is made up of *antagonist* powers; and that all regular movement is the result of a balance between them? There are principles in man, which are excited to action only by objects of *sense*. There are others, which are moved only by spiritual objects. Human nature is made up of them *all*. And when any part has been removed, the machine has gone *crank-sided*. The motions have always been irregular; the friction, often violent: and sooner or later, a consuming fire has been kindled, involving the whole in ruin.

I grant, indeed, that the *social*, are set in opposition to the *selfish* affections; and it may be thought that these are sufficient to produce the balance necessary for harmonious movements. But neither do the records of history, nor our own personal observation afford support to this hypothesis. If it is affirmed that Atheists have been known to be virtuous men, and exemplary citizens; without either denying or admitting the fact, I would ask, has there ever been a community of Atheists? If not, the affirmation, even though it should be admitted, would not serve the purpose. The moral sentiment of a community of chris-

tians, operates with great force on irreligious individuals living among them.

But let us look at human nature as it actually is. It is apparent that our *appetites* are all, in their nature, and under every modification, strictly selfish. Of our *passions*, by far the most numerous and most frequently indulged class, are of the same character. To counterbalance all these, strengthened as they are by early habits, it is necessary that the social affections should have great power; otherwise man will be a poor, sordid, despicable creature. But the strength and dignity of these affections depend on the real or supposed qualities of their objects. He, who regards man as nothing more than a reasoning and imaginative brute; and he, who looks at him as spiritual, immortal, responsible to his Maker, and destined to endless existence and eternal retributions, will be conscious of widely different feelings. Indeed one of the most important effects of religion is, that it throws around parents and children, friends, neighbors, and fellow-citizens, the awful glories of immortality and eternity. Incalculable strength is thus given to our sense of moral obligation; and all the duties of justice and mercy are enforced with a most salutary energy. But remove all the views, which religion gives of human nature, and there is no counterpoise to the selfishness of man.—His motto, and his maxim is, “let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we may die.” And he is true to his creed.—Female honor is held cheap. There is no holiness in the marriage contract. Concealed adultery is no crime. Human life is a mere trifle. Patriotism is nothing better than a desire of honor and profit. Public Spirit is a mere name. And that destruction, for which the community is ripe, lingers not. When men renounce all that is *spiritual* in their being, all hopes of immortality, all reverence of their Maker; they become, in spite of the refinements of literature, and the lights of philosophy, to the last degree, sensual and selfish: and nothing, in all the resources of human wisdom, has been found sufficient to redeem them from “the bondage of iniquity,” and from consequent ruin.

In this view of the subject, I am justified in believing.

that religion is necessary to give elevation and power, and purity to man's social affections, and that without it, he cannot enjoy any true or permanent happiness.

I am aware, indeed, that our modern reformers design totally to destroy the present structure of society. In their plan, marriage and private property, are most odious monopolies. Children belong to the Commonwealth, and the whole fruit of every man's labor goes into a common fund. The scheme is to annihilate the selfish affections, and cause a regard to the public good to absorb every feeling of private interest. It is imagined that in this way the restraints of religion and of civil government may be dispensed with. When wives and children, houses and lands, food and drink, belong all alike to every one, there can be no coveting, no fraud, no violence! It is the scheme of the *Shakers* without their virtue or their religion:—The highest reach of the fanaticism of Infidelity.

But these ravings are below the dignity of serious con-
futation.—In conclusion, then, I would just advert to a fact, often noticed by historians, in accounting for the revolutions of empires, and great, disastrous changes in the state of nations—*a decline of religion has always been attended with a decline of virtue and patriotism.* I refer to only two epochs in history for proof. The end of the Roman Commonwealth; and the reign of the second Charles of England. It is true, indeed, that two instances by no means warrant a general conclusion. But as these essays are designed for readers, somewhat acquainted with history, and as they must be confined within the limits of a weekly newspaper, it will often be necessary to give brief hints, instead of evidences in detail.

The fact, of which history affords abundant proof, may be accounted for very easily. Patriotism is not an instinct, as some suppose: for then it would be formed in all men; and probably in an equal degree. It is a *composite* affection. It is attachment to the land of our birth, and of our fathers' sepulchres; to the land where we spent the joyous days of youth, and formed friends, and felt the power of love. It grows out of our domestic, social, civil and religious relations and feelings. It is a generous and ar-

dent desire for the welfare of those who dwell in the same country, and live under the same laws with ourselves. It is a noble passion, which absorbs selfish interests, and prepares the citizen to make any sacrifice, which the public good requires.

Now, when religion sheds all its hallowed influences on all the feelings and remembrances which man connects with the name of country; and when it exerts its moral power, and raises high the standard of morality, patriotism will be pure and elevated. On the other hand, when Infidelity works its way through the community, and the citizens have renounced their spirituality, and their hopes of immortality, and their allegiance to their Creator; when dissipation, extravagance and a keen love of pleasure have infected society—there may be ambitious desires of distinction; there may be love of power and office—there may be great pretension, and vainglorious boasts of patriotism—there can hardly be any true love of country. *Ubi amor, ibi patria.* And the whole affection is concentrated on SELF. Public spirit declines; and becomes extinct.—If religion could be destroyed, I do think that it would be unwise to attempt it.

NO. III.

Is there any difference of great importance, between the different kinds of religion, which prevail among men?

The leading forms of religion, which have prevailed in the world, may be classed under three general divisions—*Heathenism, Mahometanism, and Christianity.* It is, I believe, generally maintained by the followers of Christ, that Judaism was nothing more than an outline of Christianity. For this reason, and also, because the religion of the Jews exerts, at present, comparatively small influence on the affairs of mankind, I shall pass it by.

It may not, indeed, be very important for me to notice either of the two first denominations of religious belief.

And they also would be omitted, did they not furnish some apt illustrations of my general subject. It is true, that many have expressed deep sympathies with the Turks in their late contests; and we have seen, not very long ago, in the public prints, some strong commendations of Musulman virtue; but still we doubt whether any amongst us seriously wish, that Christianity might give place, in this country, to Mahometanism. Female influence is *yet too strong for that change*. We have also read some very pretty things, respecting the poetical beauty of the heathen mythology, and the splendour of the heathen ritual.— Yet temples, and sacrifices, and hosts of priests are so expensive, that on the whole, our economical reformers can scarcely wish to take heathenism instead of the religion of Christ. I except however, from these remarks, those itinerant missionaries of Infidelity, whom Europe in its retchings and convulsions, has cast on our shores:—Those unbelieving fanatics, who go about delivering tirades against marriage, and other monopolies. They, it would seem, have adopted some of the coarsest parts of that licentious practice, which Christianity has banished from Polynesia. Nevertheless, they who are opposed to religion would not, on the whole, I presume, endeavor to introduce heathenism into the United States.

But to return.—The careful observer of mankind perceives that objects of religion, considered in the general, may, and in fact do, address themselves either, to the *reason* and *conscience* of man; or to his *senses*, and *imagination*; or to his *appetites* and *passions*. In other words, that which is termed religion in man, connects itself with one or more of these faculties, (if the term may be used with this latitude) of human nature. Christianity is the religion of reason and conscience; ancient heathenism, of the senses and imagination; Mahometanism, of the appetites and passions. These are the parts of our nature, to which these several forms of religion have the greatest affinity. And thus we are enabled to judge pretty correctly, respecting their influence in moulding the character of their votaries.

It would carry me much beyond my present purpose o)

pursue the interesting speculations, which are connected with these principles. My wish is to make these essays practically useful. And as I am fully convinced, that Christianity will be the prevailing religion of this country, my remarks shall be confined to it.

One decisive reason why I believe that the religion of Christ will not give place to any other is, that it has already so taken hold of our population, that I do not see how it can be rooted out.—The ecclesiastical statistics of the United States give assurance, that there are, at this time, 1,000,000 *communicants* in the several Protestant denominations of the country: that is, one in twelve of the entire population. But among us, owing to the happiness of our situation, marriages take place at a very early age, and are very prolific. Probably, then, of our twelve millions, at least one half are younger than people generally are, when they go to the communion table. This would make the proportion of church members to the adult population, that of *one to six*. Our computation leaves out the numerous classes of Roman Catholics and Friends: as well as some minor sects not worth mentioning in this place. I should think it not extravagant to say, that one out of five of all who have come to years of discretion in the United States, publicly professes some form or other of Christianity. Now it is well known that great numbers, who have not thought it right for them to partake of the sacraments of the church, are, nevertheless warm friends of the religion of Christ. The number of avowed unbelievers, is comparatively small. And if Christians are divided, so are they. General Smyth and Mr Schultz do not agree with Mr Robert Dale Owen and Miss Francis Wright, any more than Mr Alexander Campbell does with the Rev. Mr McCalla.—I think that Christianity will be the prevailing religion of the United States. The apparent differences in the moral character of its votaries, then, will be the subject of serious, and careful examination.

The following sketches are drawn from real life; and however imperfect, are true as far as they go. But I wish to prefix this single remark:—In looking into the

works of a certain class of religious writers, I have frequently noticed a distinction made between *true* and *false* religion. One special object of my inquiries is, to determine whether this distinction is imaginary or real.

I know intimately an old man; now near four-score years of age. He is a survivor of the Revolution; was a soldier through the whole of that war; and served with credit to himself, and benefit to his country. His mansion has been, for more than forty years, the seat of unbounded hospitality. In him the poor has always found a friend; and honest worth a firm advocate. His word is as good as any man's oath. His bargains are always fair and equitable. If he declares any thing to be wrong, few of his neighbors will maintain it to be right. His strong sense of rectitude greatly aids in keeping up a high standard of moral obligation in his neighborhood. The stern and rugged character of the soldier, has been softened down to the gentleness of a child. Instead of the peevishness and irritability of old age, there is on his countenance the beaming of kindness, and the smile of cheerfulness. The old love his society, because he lets them see that age has its comforts:—the young are pleased to be with him, because he rejoices in the happy buoyancy of their spirits, enters into their feelings, and loves to sit and tell them anecdotes of Washington, and Greene, and La Fayette, and other faithful men of former years.

In all the relations of former life, this old man has been most exemplary—As a husband, a father, a master, a neighbor, a soldier, a citizen, a magistrate. And even now, instead of pleading the infirmities of age as an excuse for self-indulgence, he keeps back from nothing which he can do, for the benefit of the community. But, what is very peculiar, and most worthy of note, although honored and respected by all, he never appears to think that long experience and faithful services give him a title to be heard, and *to have his own way*: on the contrary, he has all the ingenuous diffidence, and modesty of virtuous youth.

This venerable and happy old patriot, *is a christian*. Every one acknowledges the sincerity of his profession.

He has, for fifty years, referred to the Bible as the rule of his life. It is now his constant companion, and the "life and immortality which it brings to light" are the joy of his heart. Although loved and revered by a numerous circle of friends, he is waiting in peace, "until his change come." But I wish it here to be particularly noted, that, whenever, in the bosom of his family, and in the confidence of friendship, he refers to his *principles of action*, and to the *influences which have formed his character*, HE ASCRIBES ALL TO RELIGION:—it has strengthened his sense of justice, and his love of mercy: has produced cheerful submission under the calamities of life; and good hopes of a better life to come.

It has also been my lot to know a religionist, in whose character the following were the most striking traits.—Every external observance, whether commanded in the Bible, or prescribed by the church, was attended to with most scrupulous exactness, and performed by him precisely in the appointed manner. Just as much religious service as was required, he rendered morning and evening. Times and seasons were punctiliously regarded.—When the church appointed a fast, he fasted. When bidden to pray, he prayed. The omission of the least valuable rite or ceremony, seemed to disturb his conscience, as much as the neglect of the most important duty.

In temper, this man was morose and austere. His religion always wore a gloomy aspect. Instead of being a source of permanent happiness, it was a cause of continual anxiety. His conversations commonly turned on the *judgments* of heaven. Every unusual appearance in nature filled him with alarm; and, in his opinion, portended awful calamities. It was evident that he fasted and prayed, read his Bible and frequented his church, because he was afraid *not to do so*.

But his religion as far as I could see, exerted no beneficial influence, on his temper and feelings. He often censured severely, for he judged uncharitably. He was irritable, because he was unhappy. He loved this world much, because he found no pleasure in looking forward to another.—All who formed their opinion of religion

from his character and conduct, determined to avoid that which made him so miserable, as long as they could do without it.

I must in pursuance of my plan, attempt another sketch.—The first time the person of whose character I am next to give an outline attracted my attention, he was at a place of public worship. My observation was drawn on him, by the unusual expression of his countenance. The flashing of his eye, and the flush of his cheek indicated high excitement. There was nothing of the self-abasement, and deep solemnity, which I had been accustomed to observe in others, when under strong religious feeling. The face was rather turned up, with a satisfied air, and a very peculiar, and indiscrible smile was on the countenance—A smile, when every feature indicated the workings of some strong emotion. As I observed him, the excitement evidently increased. It rose to rapture; and then to ecstasy.—He could contain himself no longer; but forgetting all the proprieties of the place, and the comfort of others, he gave full scope to his feelings, in a loud and impassioned address, directed partly to the assembly, and partly to his Creator. And on being requested to compose himself, and allow the preacher to proceed, he exclaimed, “The Lord is delivering to these people a message by me!” Thus this man proceeded, until complete exhaustion compelled him to be silent.

I have since, had frequent opportunities of observing him closely; and have fully ascertained, that while religion exerts on him a strong influence, it is always in the same way. He has not adopted it, as a calm, steady principle, bearing on all human duties: it is an excitement. He is persuaded that he is a peculiar favorite of heaven; and imagines that intimations from above are frequently given to him, sometimes by dreams, and sometimes by strong impressions on his mind. This renders him vain, self-confident, and arrogant. His decisions are dogmatical; and he hesitates not to affirm, that they who have never felt his raptures, know nothing of the nature of true religion.

Once more, and I shall have done with this sketching

of portraits. It is my misfortune to know a man; of whose character the following is a brief but just delineation.--Religion produces in him, an excitement as powerful as in the case just described; accompanied, too, with the same strong persuasion of supernatural communications, and of peculiar favor in the sight of heaven. But this connected with a most inordinate selfishness, and with very malignant passions. He believes that the provisions of divine mercy, were made for him, and others like him. that they might have the liberty of living in this world as they please. All who oppose his peculiar opinions, or stand in his way, are regarded with the deepest hatred. Instruction finds no avenue to his understanding, because he thinks himself under the immediate teaching of the spirit. The law of brotherly kindness does not reach his heart, because he regards all who do not belong to *his party*, as enemies of Christ. No fear of man disturbs him, because he believes that the Almighty is *on his side*. He is prepared to suffer as a martyr--And he wants nothing but the power, to inflict vengeance to the uttermost, as a minister of divine justice.

These four classes of characters may stand as representatives of multitudes of individuals. I know that there are such men--and I see no reason to doubt whether there are, in the christian world, great numbers just like them. If I might designate these characters by single terms, I would say, that the first, no matter to what sect he belongs, is a true *christian*; the second is *superstitious*; the third, *enthusiastic*; the fourth, *fanatical*. The main force of religion operates on the *reason* and *conscience* of the *first*; on the *fears* of the *second*; the *imagination* of the *third*; and on the *selfishness* of the *fourth*. I do not know that I am following common usage, in this employment of terms in common use. But the application of all these words is so vague, that I felt myself under a sort of necessity of fixing their meaning to suit my own purposes.

I do not design, however, by this simplification of terms to mislead myself or my readers. I wished to trace the *phenomena* of religion to their first causes in the human mind; and thus to explain, as far as possible, the many

strange, and often distressing facts, which are continually presenting themselves to our observation. If I take a wrong road, perhaps my error may show another inquirer, the right one.

In justice to my own views, I ought still farther to remark, that there is often a blending, to considerable extent, of these different traits of religious character. True piety *may* be connected with some degree of superstition, and perhaps it is frequently mingled with a portion of enthusiasm. On the other hand, superstition and fanaticism are often combined in the same character. And enthusiasm continued for a time, is likely to render the subject fanatical. But there is this decisive test of true religion and that which distinguishes it from every counterfeit—It takes hold of man's conscience; and if it does not make him perfect, it makes him better and happier in all the relations of life.—While Superstition is slavish and debasing; Enthusiasm is ranting and extravagant; and Fanaticism is fierce and malignant.

But the sequel of this important subject, must be reserved for my next essay.

NO. IV.

How are the important differences in the religion of Christians to be accounted for?

It has been asserted, that Christianity, as distinguished from Heathenism, and Mahometanism, is the *religion of reason and conscience*. And yet truth has obliged us to state that among the *professed* followers of Christ, there are the superstitious, the enthusiastic, and the fanatical, as well as the truly christian. It is an affair of much interest and importance, to account for these differences.—Should I succeed in the attempt, my labor will be well employed; but if not, a more successful inquirer may take up the subject.—It seems to be generally admitted, that Christianity has not produced all the good, which we are

warranted to expect from it: and its warmest friends must acknowledge, that it has been, indirectly, the occasion of much evil. The ultimate object of my inquiry is the determination of the question, can the good be obtained, and the evil be avoided?

In pursuing the general subject of this essay, I wish it to be understood that the inquiry is not directed at the different modes and forms by which different denominations of christians, express their religious feelings, but at their religion itself. And to account for the facts which present themselves to every observer, I would offer the following remarks:

1. From the nature of the case, religion must contain doctrines, which address themselves to the various faculties and passions of human nature. Religious truth, as it requires belief, appeals to our reason: and as it enjoins the performance of duty, it addresses the conscience. It tells us of an Infinite Being, whose favor is better than life; and whose displeasure is worse than death. It, of course, awakens hope and fear, and urges the use of measures to obtain the desired good, and escape the dreaded evil. It reveals a state of existence entirely unlike the present, but yet is obliged to borrow a language chiefly derived from the affairs of this world.—It exhibits much, that is grand and magnificent, in the character and counsels of the Almighty: much that is glorious and awful in the retributions of eternity. It is easy, then, to see that the imagination and feelings may be greatly moved by religion, and that it may take very strong hold of our self-love.

It would seem to be impossible, therefore, to present any form of religion to a being constituted as man is, which shall not contain elements susceptible of various combinations and liable to great abuses from frail and imperfect beings. This may be thought, by some, to be a strong argument against all religion. But if it proves any thing, it proves too much. It is impossible to offer any benefit to man, with which he may not injure himself. Food, drink and raiment, though necessaries of life, are most sadly abused, by sensuality, pride and vanity. Much

of the misery of man arises from the corruption of civil government. Shall we therefore destroy life, by refusing to provide means of subsistence? Or shall we break the bonds of civil society, and turn our children, naked savages into the wilderness? As far as the objection goes, we may as well do this, as discard religion.

But every intelligent reader at once perceives, that there is no *necessity* for the abuse of any of these good things. To reject them, then, would be deplorable folly.

With regard to Christianity, its avowed and most manifest design is, to rectify all that is wrong in human nature. It operates according to the established laws of mind; and, as has been before observed, directs its main force to the reason and conscience. As far as it takes hold of other parts of his constitution, it intends to use them as auxiliaries in the accomplishment of its great work. So it is evident that one of its earliest and most distinguished teachers—the Apostle Paul—thought, when he prayed for his fellow christians, that “their whole spirit, and soul, and body might be entirely sanctified.” But a single fact will prove the truth of these remarks—when any man professes to be a christian, all expect him to be a singularly good man; and many brand him a hypocrite, if he comes short of perfection. Certainly, there is no necessity for abusing this religion.

2. Christianity, having, as was said, for its great object the correction of moral evil, encounters opposition precisely in proportion to man’s depravity. I shall not, here, enter at all into the question concerning the extent of that depravity. The existence of much, very much wickedness among men, is too fully established to admit of doubt; too generally acknowledged to require proof. Now no induction can possibly be more complete, than that which may be formed for the purpose of showing, that almost any thing is preferred, to the labor of subduing evil passions and eradicating bad habits. Ninety-nine men in a hundred prefer muscular power, to intellectual exertion. But, when the efforts of the mind are directed to itself; when they are accompanied with shame, and sorrow and remorse, they are severely painful. Few indeed have the

fortitude to persevere in them, until the work of moral renovation is completely accomplished. Men are therefore predisposed to adopt substitutes for pure and simple Christianity.—According to the constitution of their nature, they feel the necessity of something in the form of religion; but a religion, which makes no compromises with their evil propensities, is not suited to the state of their hearts.

3. The cultivation of the conscience, as it respects religious obligation, forms no part of general education. It has been, most unphilosophically, affirmed even by men of high authority, that while the memory, the understanding and the taste of the young require careful discipline, their moral powers are created perfect; and that the contrary supposition impugns the wisdom of our Creator. Every fact in the history of human nature, contradicts this assertion. None, who have been inconsiderate enough to make it, have ever undertaken to show, why it is not as *bungling work*, to create us with an imperfect reason, as with an imperfect conscience. Every observer of human nature, every man who has brought up children, ought to know, that the moral, as well as the intellectual faculties are developed gradually, and are greatly improved, under a careful and wise culture. When either are neglected man is not a *matured*, and *fully* formed human being. A child not instructed in the duties, which he owes to his parents; a citizen not informed as to the obligations he is under to his country, has, at best, but vague and indistinct views of these important subjects, and of course a very feeble sense of obligation. So also in the case of religion. Still however, from the condition of his nature, man has his anxieties and his fears in regard to the future; and his seasons of peculiar excitability; in which it is easy to make powerful impressions on his mind.—On these occasions, if the conscience has not been well disciplined by religious truth, there is great danger of the prevalence of false religion. But the particular form which it shall assume, will chiefly depend on individual temperament. The timid will be superstitious; the sanguine, enthusiastic; the selfish and malignant, fanatical.

It hence appears, that there is something in the present condition of man, which may occasion various misapprehensions and abuses even of such a religion as Christianity. It often finds his reason uncultivated, his conscience dark or misinformed; his passions in sad disorder. Is it at all surprizing, then, that he should misapprehend its true nature, and greatly abuse its blessings?

But there is another view of our general subject, which must be taken, in order to account for the present state of the christian world. The careful, unprejudiced reader of the New Testament, cannot fail to see that the founder of Christianity relied entirely on the application of religious truth to the mind, for the production of the effect intended by him. But most of those, who bear his name, are under the influence of moral causes of a very different character, which began their operation in ages far remote from the present.

The general subject here introduced is one highly curious, and truly important. It is the *transmission of intellectual and moral influences* through the successive generations of mankind. It is amazing to think of the effects which are produced in the present day on the character of individuals and nations by Moses, Christ—Confucius, Mahomet. It is so in the affairs of common life, as well as those of religion. It was my lot to read the Latin classics, for the first time, at an obscure grammar school, in a very retired part of the country. And I well remember the surprise which I felt, even when a boy, on discovering the identity of many of the superstitions of the old Romans, and of the people around me, who had never heard of an augur or a soothsayer in their lives—such as deriving omens from birds; from particular animals crossing one's path, from the spilling of salt, and other things of the same kind. This subject has never yet been considered in all its extent. And I have made these remarks only for the sake of presenting it to the mind of the reader, that he may appreciate the value of the following observations.

The first teachers of Christianity did nothing but announce verbally the doctrines of their religion, and use

two very simple, but significant rites, as signs of discipline, and representations of fundamental truths. Their whole worship was in direct and strong contrast with the splendid and gorgeous ritual of pre-existing religions.— And it was earnestly repeated to the faithful, that rites and ceremonies were, in themselves, of no importance—that, in a word, nothing was of any avail, but a complete moral renovation, and a life of true sanctity. The progress of such a religion in the world, in its then condition, is a fact which has never yet been satisfactorily accounted for, on the hypothesis of its human origin.

Although apparently very feeble in its beginning, and opposed to much opposition, Christianity began, at length, in many places to gain the ascendancy. This furnished motives to aspiring men, to connect their interests with the rising church. Still however, many a hard conflict was to be maintained, before the old and established religion could be overthrown, and the new one made to take its place. And when the sagacious Constantine saw that it would subserve his purposes to profess Christianity, many who belonged to the church, retained much of the spirit of heathenism.

From that day even until the present, the religion of Christ has been employed as a political engine; and the whole ingenuity of man has been tasked to adapt it to that unholy purpose. It was necessary to corrupt it, before it could answer the design. Years of profound research, and volumes of elaborate investigation would be necessary, to trace throughout the stupendous system of imposture, which has been practised on mankind. I can only touch on some of the general principles adopted by its contrivers, and on a few of the effects produced.

NO. V.

PRINCIPLES OF THE GREAT RELIGIOUS IMPOSTURE.

1. Men may succeed in satisfying the demands which religion makes on their nature, by substituting superstition, enthusiasm, or fanaticism, in place of true piety.

2. It is easier to make men superstitious, enthusiastic, or fanatical, than really christian.

3. False religion, in any of these forms, takes as strong hold of the mind, and is capable of exciting it quite as powerfully, as genuine piety.

4. Men under the excitements of superstition, &c. are easily influenced and controlled by their religious leaders.

5. Expedients are to be adopted to frame a system suited to persons of every taste, habit, and temperament. Religious truth must be retained for the pious.—Observances must be multiplied for the superstitious.—A splendid ritual must be formed for the imaginative,—indulgence of the appetites and passions must be allowed to the fanatic—distinctions of rank, and honors must be contrived for the ambitious, &c.

6. And finally, that one uniform system may be pursued, and one object kept in view, the ministers of religion must, by celibacy, be separated from the rest of society, and bound together for the increase of spiritual authority. Moreover, as many other persons as possible, both male and female, must be united to the church, by the same bond.

I do not pretend that these principles have been laid down as rules of action by ecclesiastical authority in former times. But I would be understood to say that in *philosophizing* on ecclesiastical history, it has appeared to me evident that the measures adopted and pursued by *the church* had a wonderful conformity to principles such as these.

In regard to the first four, in this brief specification, I would refer the reader to Gibbon's account of the Crusades

in his *Decline and Fall*, to Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, or to Mills' *History of the Crusades*.—I will just state one or two insulated facts.

A Greek Pirate, after innumerable robberies and murders, was executed not long ago at some town on the Mediterranean. During his confinement, no religious instruction affected him in the least degree. But on one occasion he was greatly agitated and alarmed. It was ascertained on inquiry, that this was occasioned by the loss of a little consecrated image, which he had been accustomed to carry with him. On recovering it, he also recovered his calmness, and met death, without fear of the consequences.

Banditti in Italy and Spain, on being killed, while attempting to rob travellers, have had about their persons, strings of beads, and images of the Holy Virgin.

But there is no room, and no necessity for the accumulation of facts of this kind.—True religion takes hold of the conscience, and connects itself with all the duties of man. It gives double strength to the bonds of domestic life. It enforces all social obligations. It gives its sanctity to civil laws. At the same time, by making men thoughtful, and considerate, it renders them firm and independent. But, on the contrary, the various forms of false religion regard only the peculiar and appropriate object, by which the passions are excited. And he, who knows how to manage them, knows how to make the devotee completely subservient to his purposes.—Thus, a superstitious man is under the influence of fear. His mind, overpowered by this passion, acknowledges in his religious teacher, a divine authority. Disobedience to his commands, is rebellion against the Almighty. And no ceremonies are too burdensome, no penance is too severe, when heaven is to be gained, and hell to be avoided.

In regard to the fifth principle mentioned above, it deserves to be remarked, that a scheme to obtain universal domination, requires something which should be adapted to men of all sorts and conditions. And here we find a display of the most consummate ingenuity.

It was necessary, in completion of the great plan, that there should be something to meet the demands of those, who might happen to be truly pious. Accordingly, although, for purposes which will be noticed hereafter, the privilege of reading the scriptures, and the right of private judgment were denied to the people, yet the leading facts and most of the doctrines taught in the Bible, were retained in the creed of the church. Thus it was possible to make, when occasion required, a considerable show of biblical orthodoxy.

But in addition to this, the history of other religions was searched and whatever in them was suited to work on superstitious fears, or to inflame the imagination, or strike powerfully on the senses, was adopted. In comparing the religious ceremonies, of various nations, it is right curious to observe with what adroitness the rites of heathenism, under a new name, but with very little change of form, were accommodated to the object of those who wished to establish an universal dominion over the minds of men. In the first age of the church, nothing could be more plain and simple, than its religious services.—They consisted in prayer: in hymns of praise to the Creator and Redeemer; reading the Scriptures; and affectionate exhortations by the religious teachers, that the faithful should live in the practice of justice, piety and charity. A significant application of water was the sign of admission to the christian society; and an exceedingly moderate participation of bread and wine, “in remembrance of him who died for sinners,” was the token of continued fellowship. But in process of time rites and ceremonies were so multiplied, that it required long and careful drilling, to enable one to go through “the manual exercise” of a priest. They were so contrived, too, as to suit the rich and great, who love magnificence and splendor; and the ignorant, who love any thing which strikes strongly on the senses. The minister of religion clad in rich and costly robes, stood before the people as a viceroysent from heaven.

But Mahometanism seems to have afforded its contributions to the corruption of the church. That artful man

knew how to gain proselytes, by allowing indulgence to the passions. This enabled christians to discover that the true sons of the church might enjoy the charms of *earthly hours*, if they would only be pious enough to pay the priest well for the indulgence.

Thus, by various devices, the fears of superstition were awakened or strengthened; the imagination of the enthusiast was inflamed; the senses were powerfully affected: and the sensual, the proud, the malignant, were encouraged to make compromises with heaven and bargain through the priest, for liberty to gratify their cherished passions. The true church was the gate of heaven: and the divinely constituted and duly authorized gatekeepers, were constantly teaching, that all who were not admitted by them, were without doubt, children of the devil, and heirs of perdition.

I do not consider it necessary to spend time in showing that the device of *celibacy* was a master stroke of policy for the promotion of ecclesiastical authority, and increasing the power of the church. Every one knows with what numerous and strong bonds, the conjugal and parental affections unite man to human society, with all its interests. A due consideration of this subject will prepare every impartial mind for the admission of this assertion, that no confidence can be placed in the allegiance and attachment to society of a body of men, cut off by the principles of their association from all sympathies, connexions and enjoyments of marriage.

In the course of this fearful imposition, it was soon perceived that the influence of the Bible on both the mind and the heart, was the greatest difficulty in the way of its accomplishment. All christians profess to believe the divine authority of the Bible. But the simplicity of the religion there taught; the plainness, truth and energy of its moral precepts; its constant manner of connecting religion with all man's relations and duties; its decisive application of the unerring rule, "by their fruits ye shall know them;" and what is of no less importance, its authoritative recognition of the truth that religion is a per-

sonal concern, and that every individual must give account for himself to his Maker,—all showed plainly enough, that while that book continued open to the inspection of the people, the scheme of establishing human authority over the mind of man could not be executed. It was therefore pretended, that as there was a divinely authorized priesthood to declare the meaning of scripture, there was no necessity that the sacred volume should be in the hands of the laity. It was moreover alleged that as the ignorant multitude were continually liable to error, the best way to prevent the perversion of the scriptures, would be to keep them safe in the hands of the priests; and let the church tell the people what they must do to be saved.

The accomplishment of this device removed every check from the clergy, and the triumph of priestly ambition over the mind and conscience was complete. This state of mental bondage was continued for ages, and one long, dark, starless night reigned over the christian world.—The church was polluted and plagued with many of the worst evils of heathenism.

The means, by which this darkness was in some degree dissipated, and light again made to dawn on christendom, are too well known to be included in this outline. But here we observe, as in other cases, the slow progress of moral causes. It has been kindly provided that communities shall not suddenly become corrupt and be debased. And many an opportunity is afforded of averting ruin, before it comes. Perhaps the nature of this gracious provision is such as necessarily to prevent the rapid operation of means employed for human improvement. Perhaps, too, changes in themselves really beneficial, if suddenly made, would be like tornadoes, which, indeed, purify the air, but carry destruction in their train. But be this as it may, it is an unquestionable fact, that, in general, moral causes operate slowly on communities, and the salutary changes produced by them, encounter much opposition from the prejudices, habits, and interests of men. When once an evil has obtained general preva-

lence, it requires a long time to effect its entire removal. This is as true in regard to religion as any affair of civil life. And it is a wide mistake to suppose, that a religion confirmed by miracles, ought to operate in every age with miraculous power, so as to prevent every evil, and perfectly accomplish its work without ever failing. This is to confound physical and moral causes, and make no allowance for the voluntary agency of man.—A continued interference, such as this, with the established laws of the human mind, would make a new world, and might require an entire change in the whole plan of the divine government. The expectation is unreasonable; and is utterly unwarranted by the Bible. The divine influences of which the holy book speaks, do not supersede the use of means, nor do they violate the laws of our nature. But to proceed,

That great religious revolution, which began in Europe about three centuries ago, assumed the right of private judgment as a fundamental principle. This indeed is only another name for liberty of conscience.—But it is directly at war with all the pretensions of spiritual authority, which had been maintained for more than a thousand years. It of course produced a dreadful conflict. As might have been expected, the application of the principle was not well understood. And the mistakes and inconsistencies of the truly great men, who were the principal actors in this interesting scene, often gave advantage to their adversaries, and greatly injured their own cause.

The general prevalence, too, of ignorance among the people, who had, for ages, professed a religion unconnected with moral obligation,—a religion of mere superstitious observances,—disqualified them, in a great degree, for a principle of such extent and efficiency as this. It is therefore not surprising that, under the excitement which pervaded Europe, many deplorable cases of extravagance, and many fearful instances of civil commotion took place. Some seemed to think that the right of private judgment was the right to be as fanatical and wicked as they pleased.

These unhappy circumstances alarmed many celebrated men; occasioned considerable modifications of the great principle on which they began their work; and, at least in some instances, stopped the reformation before it was completed. Hence rites and customs were retained, not at all consistent with primitive simplicity; and spiritual authority, in direct opposition to the right of private judgment, was still claimed.

But while some stopped short of a complete reformation, the impulse which was given to the mind carried others beyond the bounds of religion and reason. The issue was Infidelity. This leaven began to work, strongly at this period, and at length showed itself openly to the world. New alarm was created; and many who had before manifested great caution and fear in regard to the principle of the reformation, found additional reasons for limiting and restraining its application. Hence the reluctance to give up old claims was greatly strengthened.

To add to all these evils, the progress of sound knowledge among the *people* of christendom has been slow: and even now the mighty work of universal education remains to be accomplished. He, who shall most effectually promote this cause, will be more entitled than any other man of his age to have his name enrolled among the best benefactors of his species.

Now, if to the preceding facts and observations, be added the certain truth that religion operates according to the established laws of the human mind, and is modified by the circumstances connected with it, we shall perhaps see the reason why christianity has been, and even now is mistaken and perverted; and why there are yet such varieties in the religion of its professors. The moral evil appertaining to man, and his unwillingness to have it corrected; the want of sound general education, and the remains of former prejudices and superstitions account for the moral phenomena in question.

NO. VI.

BIGOTRY AND SECTARIANISM.

In our cursory view of the various principles in human nature, which modify the *spirit of religion*, it seems necessary to notice the prevalence of *bigotry*, and *sectarianism*.

Bigotry is "an obstinate and blind attachment to any particular opinions." It is a state of mind, which may exist in relation to any subject of thought, or object of belief.—To those who have not carefully examined human nature, the strong repugnance, which most men feel to severe thinking, and laborious patient investigation is almost incredible. They are ashamed, however, not to have an opinion on subjects of general interest, and common conversation. They therefore believe as somebody else believes; and simply because he *believes so*. Opposition to opinions thus formed occasions displeasure for two reasons—First, because it presupposes that one is in error; and this implies weakness. Secondly, because it implies at least the expediency of re-examination, and the adoption of new opinions. But this most men greatly dislike. They therefore determine to maintain their old ground. This determination strengthens opinion. And thus the process goes on, until the obstinate and blind attachment mentioned in the definition, is formed.

It deserves to be remarked, too, that in *all commanding* subjects, such as politics, religion, &c. opinions are always connected with *feelings*. Disputes produce *warmth*. And when the mind has gone through the process just briefly indicated, the words, which have frequently been brought into controversy, become not signs of ideas, but representatives of prejudices. Thus the terms *Federalism*, *Democracy*, *Popery*, *Prelacy*, *Calvinism*, *Arminianism*, &c. mean something, which one cordially hates, or loves, as the case may be, but why, it is impossible to say.

I do not like you, doctor Fell! .

The reason why, I cannot tell,

But, I don't like you, doctor Fell.

So, then, bigotry implies not only a blind attachment to opinions, but easiness of irritation, when these opinions are called in question. It is wrathful, and unforgiving.

No language can exaggerate the injuries, which it has done to the interests of humanity.

Bigotry may exist, where there are no divisions among christians. But not so with *sectarianism*. This state of mind in religion, is entirely analogous to *party spirit* in politics. The view, which I wish to give of this subject, requires the following remarks,

Considering the imbecility of human nature, it is the part of wisdom that numbers should associate for the accomplishment of difficult and important objects. Almost all great events are brought about by combined exertion. The purest and best men in the world, have taken advantage of the social principle, and of the power of concentrated action, to effect their benevolent purposes.—I would designate this laudable expedient by the word UNION. It is intended to express such sameness of opinion, feeling, and purpose as produces voluntary, and energetic co-operation in the accomplishment of a *good* object. Its beneficial effects are numerous, and highly valuable. It greatly promotes all the kindly feelings of human nature, and mightily augments the power of man. If any choose to call such union of good men by the name of *party*—be it so. I however am accustomed to use this word in a different sense; namely to mark the *combination* of individuals, for the accomplishment of *selfish* purposes; such as obtaining wealth, honor and power for themselves. The independence and liberty of this country were the result of the *union of good men, true patriots*; its subsequent history affords examples enough of *party spirit*. A striking difference between them is this: in the former case, men only use arguments which they believe to be sound, make statements which they know to be true, and adopt means which they think honest and honorable:—in the latter, the end sanctifies the means; and any measure is adopted, which is likely to accomplish the object of the party. But this is a subject too familiar, to require further explanation.

The founder of Christianity designed to accomplish an object of incalculable good, by appropriate means. It was He, who first proposed the idea, of a universal reli-

gion.—He revealed the *Creator* as the common father of all; and taught the common brotherhood of mankind. He proposed no other method of propagating his religion, than the appointment of faithful and honest teachers, who should make known the simple and sublime truths which he had taught. If men, on conviction of the truth, embraced the new religion—it was well; they were admitted into the society of christians; and in obedience to the salutary precepts of the gospel, were warranted to expect supreme felicity in a future world. But if they rejected this religion, no more could be done—they must abide the consequences. The soldier of the cross had no weapons but truth, charity, and a blameless life.

In the lapse of three centuries, however, there were many disastrous changes. But they need not now be traced. The complete ascendancy of spiritual power, which was ultimately established, produced, if not uniformity of opinion, at least uniformity of profession through the whole church.

But at the time, when the minds of men were delivered from the fetters which had been forged for them, various causes modified their religious opinions. In some cases, the changes which took place, were brought about by the co-operation of civil and religious rulers; in others, by the united efforts of the people. In the former, authority was carefully retained in the hands of a few; in the latter, power was claimed and exercised by the whole body. In some countries the government was monarchical; in others, the form at least was republican. Some Reformers at once embraced the truth, that Scripture alone has authority to determine religious controversies; while others were disposed to divide this authority between the Bible and the church.—Some saw clearly, that the true method of interpreting Scripture is to apply to its language the principles of sound philology; while others were enthralled by the opinions of their predecessors, and embarrassed by their notions of ecclesiastical polity. Some wished to urge the Reformation to the simplicity of primitive times; while others chose to retain many of the superadded rites

and ceremonies, on the ground that, although not commanded in the Bible, they were yet decent and useful. And, with singular inconsistency, they insisted on authority to determine by ecclesiastical canons, what Christ had left undecided.

The whole body of protestants, however, notwithstanding these differences of opinion, were so united as to acknowledge the churchmembership of all, and to co-operate against the common enemy of the Reformation.—This union continued, until the republican tendencies of the polity adopted by some of the Reformers began to be developed. This created alarm among the ruling powers; and the expedient was adopted of breaking church communion, and refusing to acknowledge christian brotherhood. It was a political, and not a christian measure.

In these, and similar ways, divisions among protestants began and were fomented. At this day, and in this country, they exist in great distinctness and force. That they modify, and, in many ways, greatly affect the spirit of religion is an undoubted truth. But, as no one will contend that party spirit, in a free government is an unmitigated evil, so it ought not to be supposed that sectarianism is productive of no sort of good. The general principle of our political institutions is, *the association of honest and virtuous citizens for the common welfare*. So, the true idea of the church of Jesus Christ is, *a Society of sincere christians formed for mutual benefit*. It cannot be denied that, in either case, the carrying out of the theory into complete practice, would be the best thing possible. Yet the contentions of parties in the state is infinitely preferable to "the calm of despotism." In like manner, the jealousies and controversies of Christians, is, beyond all comparison to be preferred to the dead and dark uniformity produced by spiritual tyranny. And as politicians console themselves for the evils of party by the good which grows out of it; I see no reason why the friends of christianity may not find similar consolation under the evils of sectarianism.

It stimulates the minds of men in religious inquiries—it sometimes elicits and establishes truth—it occasions a

frequent reference to the Bible, and a careful study of all parts of Scripture—it may serve, to very considerable extent, in particular circumstances, the cause of religious liberty—and often checks the progress of ecclesiastical corruption. Yet these benefits all belong to the case of good educed out of evil—and evil of very serious character. The violence of party always endangers the republic: it is in truth a poor substitute for genuine patriotism. So sectarianism always does injury—and is a poor substitute for true religion. The remaining part of this paper will be employed in portraying some of its evils.

The points of agreement, among christians, are more numerous than those of difference. The latter are not of such a nature as to determine the christian character. Sometimes they arise from different modes of expressing the same truth. Sometimes they involve questions which can never be decided by the human understanding. These differences ought not to destroy the unity of the church, or separate christians from each other. But the thing is done. Sectarian zeal has kindled its fires—and evils, such as the following, are the result.

1. Men easily persuade themselves, that the points, on which they differ from their fellow christians, are the most important of all in the whole system. This facility arises from such causes as these.—It is much easier to manifest great zeal for a particular rite, or mode of administration, than to subject the heart to the discipline of holiness. Hence, not unfrequently, a fierce sectarian spirit is substituted, by human perverseness, for true religion. In these cases, the moral influences of christianity are weakened, just in proportion to the extent, to which this substitution is made. The spirit of sectarianism applies an opiate to the conscience. Zeal for a religious party, takes the place of “good works;” and the man is really a worse man for being a “warm professor of religion.”—Every friend to the true interests of society ought to exert himself in a prudent way, to moderate the heat of religious party spirit.

But, farther:—religious teachers strongly imbued with

a sectarian spirit, and desirous of obtaining distinction in their own denomination, are everlastingly harping on the peculiarities of their sect, and its superior excellence. They can scarcely ever go into the pulpit, without saying something about their excellent ——— What? The blank may be filled by every one, according to his own observation. But it is not *faith*; it is not repentance; it is not charity; it is not holy living: for these are not the distinctive badges of any one denomination. But it is precisely that form of doctrine, or mode of worship, or method of administration, which distinguishes them from other christians, and occasions a separation from them: —it is something which a man may *want*, and yet be a true christian. Now, when the ministers of the gospel act thus, it is not at all wonderful that many should substitute sectarian zeal for the piety and charity, which the gospel requires.

2. From this view of the subject, it is easy to see that the kindling up of party spirit in the church, is apt to generate dislike, heartburnings, and contentions. And this especially when it proceeds to the extreme of exclusive pretension. When christians of one sect denounce those of another, as schismatics and heretics, and refuse to own them as fellow christians, the destruction of charity and all kindly feelings is sure to follow. No man, unless he is *infallibly* sure of being right, is warranted to set up claims of this kind: and it is too much for erring mortals to expect that they will be tamely submitted to without resistance by others. It will never do for any denomination to assume that they alone are right, and demand that all others should yield to this assumption. They may declaim as much as they please on peace and charity. All intelligent persons will see and feel, *that this is a mere disguise of party spirit, contrived for the accomplishment of sectarian purposes.*

3. When party zeal proceeds to the extravagance of exclusive pretension, it produces a proud and arrogant spirit of an extremely offensive character, and entirely opposed to the meekness and lowliness of the gospel. It requires little knowledge of human nature to see that this effect

will certainly be produced in such a creature as man—ready as he is to be puffed up by every adventitious distinction. *His* society constitutes the only true church—*his* mode of administration, is the only one instituted by heaven—*his* teacher alone is invested with religious authority! I have seen this proud spirit lurking under the forms of the deepest humility. The arrogant pretender is a servant of the servants of Christ.—Yet if he has power, he persecutes: if he has none, when his claims are resisted, he cries out “persecution!”

4. The mighty importance given to these distinctive peculiarities not only modifies the spirit of religion, and injures true piety; but it often awakens most unhappy prejudices against christianity itself. Jesus Christ intended to produce the salutary effects of his religion solely by the influence of truth.—And according to the Bible, the value of all religious observances, consists in their efficiency in carrying this truth to the understanding, and impressing it on the heart.—But, as we have seen, sectarian zeal magnifies distinctive modes and forms, and rests on them, while it neglects the “weighty matters” of the gospel, repentance, faith, and charity. Now an unbeliever, who has never considered the design of religious observances, is amazed and disgusted, when he sees christians, divided into sects, and maintaining bitter controversies about matters which appear to him of no value at all. And no arguments are sufficient to overcome the prejudices, excited by these exhibitions of christianity made by vehement sectarians. Doubtless the worst enemies of christianity are found among its professed friends.

5. But sectarianism operates to the injury of common morality, in the same way in which party spirit in politics does. Such is the pliancy of selfishness, that it easily mixes itself with all the interests of a party, and soon perfectly identifies with them the interests of the individual. It generates a peculiar sort of esprit du corps. The sectarian in religion, as the party man in politics, considers every thing said against the errors of his sect, as a personal insult: every thing done to oppose their progress, as a personal injury. Very often, then, that which

is wrong, and is known to be wrong, is defended with a zeal and earnestness, which ought never to be shown except in a good cause: and with a temper, which ought never to be manifested in any cause whatsoever. But this insensibly lowers the standard of truth and honesty: it exerts a most unhappy influence on all the moral feelings; and rapidly spreads a deep and fatal corruption through the community. It is not possible to describe, without unreasonably extending this essay, the mischiefs to which this spirit may lead. One particular, however, must not be omitted. Religion from its very nature, extends to all human relations and actions. It comes to man with divine authority. It requires him in *all things* to regard the divine commandments. It puts him, wherever he goes, however employed, and what office soever he sustains, on his responsibility to his Maker. And in all these circumstances, if the religion is *genuine*, man acts as he ought. But if it is *spurious*, its mighty power urges him far astray. Sectarian zeal highly excited, like strong party spirit, is unscrupulous in regard to means. It regards, as before remarked, any measure as lawful, which will accomplish its object.—And in our republic, it may hereafter be seen mingling with political partizans and strengthening itself by a subserviency to their purposes. Thus will the dismal evils of sectarianism and party spirit heighten and exasperate each other. And the miserable politicians, who meant to secure their objects by playing off one religious sect against another, and the deluded, or hypocritical christians, who loaned themselves and their religion to political demagogues, will be tossed, if not wrecked by storms, which they themselves helped to raise.

These evils and a thousand more, may arise from the violence of a sectarian spirit. But it is not fair to charge them on true religion, nor on religious liberty. In a *despotism*, there is no party spirit. The will of one man is law for millions. The slave has nothing to do, but obey. It is in a republic only, where offices and honors are open to the people; where the individual citizen has his weight in the government, that there is full scope for the spirit of party. Shall the cause of liberty then be trampled down

and its blessings rejected?—I am writing on the eve of the fourth of July; and feel that a recurrence to this date, is a sufficient answer to the question.—No! let every one who loves his country, do all in his power to promote the virtue and intelligence, which made us free, and which alone can keep us so.—But shall we, on account of the evils of false religion, abandon the true? We do then voluntarily run into the very whirlpool, which we wish to avoid—and cast away blessings, which nothing else can afford.

NO. VII.

Necessity of Religious liberty—Brief sketch of its History—Present state in this Country.

In the preceding Essays, I have shown that man is, by the constitution of his nature, a religious being—that it is impossible, if it were expedient, to eradicate religion—and that there is a very wide difference in the moral influence of the different forms of religion which prevail among men. In doing this, I have endeavored to exhibit the real nature of true piety, and the destructive features of superstition, enthusiasm, fanaticism, bigotry and sectarianism.

My object has been to prepare the way for answering some important practical questions, to which allusion has already been made. It must, I think, be apparent, that **genuine piety* is a very great blessing, and *false religion*

** Note.*—It has been gratifying to me to learn that the character which I drew, for illustrating the nature of genuine religion has been applied to a number of persons in different parts of the country, and of different denominations. One individual was before me when that likeness was drawn. It is said to be an exact portrait of many, whom I have never seen. Does not this show that true religion is every where the same? How poor a thing is bigotry and sectarianism, compared with it!

a very great curse to any community. And the *desideratum* is, an answer to the inquiry, how may the blessings of the one be most fully obtained, and the evils of the other be most effectually averted?

I shall attempt, in my humble manner, to answer this important question. And my first proposition is, that,

TO ENSURE A COMMUNITY ALL THE BENEFITS OF RELIGION,
IT OUGHT TO BE COMPLETELY FREE.

I know that individuals may be most eminently pious, devoted, and happy in the hopes which true religion affords, while suffering cruel persecution. Of this the history of the church furnishes abundant proof. But our present inquiry regards the blessings conferred by religion on the people at large. And these, it is maintained, are shed abroad most richly, and enjoyed most fully, when the civil authorities lay no restraints whatever on the conscience.

It is not, however, my object, at this time of day, to adduce formal proofs of this truth, as though it were doubted—Thanks to our forefathers, it is not so.—My purpose is rather to explain the *reason*, than prove the *justness* of my position. And this, I think, is a work of some importance; because with many of my countrymen, I apprehend, love of religious freedom is rather the result of *prejudice* than *conviction*. That this is true, seems to follow clearly from the fact, that in numerous cases, the nature of the thing is altogether mistaken. Many understand the affair thus—(Religion is free; therefore man *may* rightfully reject all religion, or choose any that pleases him best: and one is as good as another, provided only that the religionist is sincere.) The sound logic, in the first case, is this—Religion is free and therefore the civil authorities have no right to inflict on any man punishments or disabilities on account of his religious belief or worship. And as to the second, who can doubt, in many instances, the sincerity of the fanatic, the enthusiast, or the sectarian? But surely, it is not as well for the community, that men should be fanatics as true christians. I take it that men

enjoy true liberty of conscience, when the church and state are completely separate, so that the civil authorities can *compel* no one to pay his money for the support of religion; and can interfere in no way with ecclesiastical doctrine or discipline: and when the church itself has no power but that conferred by truth and love. Every individual then is bound to embrace truth, and practice love, and for failing to do so, he is answerable to his Creator, not to his fellow creatures.—With these explanations, I proceed to observe,

1. *Religion ought to be free, because otherwise it seems impossible, without a continued miracle, to preserve it from general corruption.*

There are two methods by which religious liberty is restrained. The first is that in which the civil government adopts a particular form of religion as its own, compels every subject to support it as the religion of the state, and offers all political honors and emoluments to the members of the established church. Such an establishment may exist either with, or without the toleration of other denominations. In either case, the interests of religion suffer. Let us take the most favorable.

In the first place, the civil ruler is the head of the church; he controls the clergy, and of course is free from all ecclesiastical discipline. What bishop dares to rebel the king, or his prime minister from the communion? What priest would venture to subject his patron to spiritual censure, however unholy his manner of life? The example then of a number of great men in a nation, making laws to support the church, and claiming all its privileges, yet before the world setting at nought all the precepts of piety, must operate powerfully to the injury of religion. The practice of a clergy, cringing to their superiors, and glossing over their licentious lives, while they exert ecclesiastical authority over the common people, cannot but corrupt priests and people, and bring religion into contempt.

But in the next place, when the state provides a permanent living for the ministers of religion, and appoints them to their places, they are, in fact, officers of the gov-

ernment. And office-hunting exerts all its corrupting and degrading influences among the clergy. Men are tempted to seek, and do seek for the priest's office, not because they love religion, and wish to do good to their fellow men, but because they *wish for a living*. And when vested with their brief authority, they strut among their inferiors in the arrogance of official dignity. Who does not see that here is a source of deep corruption?

Again: toleration is never so complete, that Dissenters are free from oppression. There is more religious liberty in Great Britain than in any other country, where religion is established by law. Yet experience there has shown the necessity of organizing among the Dissenters a society for the preservation of religious liberty. The annual reports of that society show that there is a call for its vigilance and energy. The established clergy are continually under strong temptations to sustain religion by authority, and war against liberty of conscience. All this corrupts the heart, while it alienates the people from religion. Legal oppression has made many an unbeliever, but never, a sincere convert.

Once more: where there are differences of rank in the clergy, as is almost universally the case in establishments, the higher orders in the church associate with the higher orders in the state, and live in the same kind of princely splendor. They also mingle in the political contentions of their day; and while clothed with the external sanctity of religion, they are in great danger of becoming, contrary to their most solemn vows, mere men of the world. This needs no comment. I do most cheerfully grant that to all these cases, there are most honorable exceptions.— But they *are* EXCEPTIONS. The result of the whole is, a general lowering of the standard of piety, and of ministerial holiness.

But there is another scheme for restraining liberty of conscience, far more disastrous in its effects, than that which has been noticed. It is that, by which the spiritual authority is exalted, in a community, above the civil, and the rulers of a commonwealth are subjected to the ministers of religion. The history of the dark ages of Europe

affords the only example of this horrible evil, unless one should choose to bring under the same class the case of Mohammed, who united both civil and religious authority in his own person.

This tyranny admits of no toleration. Dissent and non-conformity are treason and rebellion. Oppression enters into man's soul, and grinds him down to the dust. One is not allowed even to conceal within his own bosom his disagreement with the dogmas and rescripts of his spiritual rulers. He must publicly and frequently manifest his assent and consent—He must fall down and worship the image which has been set up, or be cast into the burning fiery furnace.

The effect of such an establishment on the minds of the clergy is, to the last degree, corrupting. They use religion as other men use unlimited civil power—for their own selfish purposes. They employ the most awful truths, and the most sacred things in subservience to their sensual pursuits and the designs of their unhallowed ambition. The majesty of Deity, the glories of heaven, the fearfulness of eternal perdition, the redeeming love of the Saviour, are all degraded and desecrated by aspiring and overreaching priests. The effect is just such as might be expected. The most hardened infidelity in the world is to be found among clergymen, who thus abuse religion. It was a HOLY FATHER who said, "the fable of Jesus and Mary is gainful for us!" The higher and more intelligent classes of secular men, see through all this trick and chicanery of the church, and understand its object.—While it answers their purposes, they lend it their support; or they submit because it is too mighty for their strength to overthrow it. But it confirms them in unbelief.—Among the common people, there is superstition, there is enthusiasm, there is fanaticism, there is the most besotted bigotry, but scarcely any thing like true religion. And when an exception does occur, piety is sadly weakened and perverted by some of its spurious forms.

Before the next argument is introduced, I must beg room for a remark, which if not called for *now*, may probably appear appropriate before this ephemeral essay

shall be forgotten. *Religious liberty is essential to the permanence, if not to the existence, of political freedom.* The contrary has, indeed, been often maintained; and the Republics of the middle ages have been referred to as evidence. But American citizens have too much sagacity to be deceived by names. In these boasted commonwealths, there was nothing like a guarranty of the rights of the people. The government was an aristocracy.—The heads of the church, and the nobles of the state, though sometimes in contest, generally so understood one another as to agree in keeping the people in complete subjection. When a man has surrendered to another the right of keeping his conscience, and judging for him, what he ought to think, and say, and do, in relation to the most important subject in the world, what may he not be brought to surrender?—But there is no necessity of resorting either to reasoning or antiquity for proof. In our own day, civil and religious liberty co-exist; and in their progress they march hand in hand. Of this, the great body of our people, have no doubt. But there is growing up among us under foreign influence, a class of religionists, who hold and propagate opposite opinions.—I proceed to show,

2. *That religion ought to be free, because otherwise it cannot produce its appropriate effects on the community.*

In the first place, all tyranny and oppression are wicked. And it is demoralizing and debasing to yield to wickedness, as well as to practise it. In this case, too, the influence exercised is directly on the mind. And as far as it prevails, it subdues the reason and conscience of man; and does therefore directly counteract the effects of true religion.

But that this may be more apparent, I observe, in the next place, that religion, as I now use the term, is, *theoretically*, the TRUTH concerning the existence, perfections and government of the Deity; and the way in which he is to be worshipped:—as an *internal sentiment*, it is *a state of feeling corresponding to the TRUTH*; and as an affair of *external conduct*, it is a *course of action prompted by this state of feeling*. There can, therefore, be no reli-

gion, where there is no truth understood, believed, felt, and carried out into action. But in order to receive the truth in this way, its evidence must be seen, and the force of it be felt. It is so universally, where pure christianity is heartily embraced. In times of persecution, the firm and lofty spirits, capable of exerting the full power of conscience, embrace religion, and adhere to it, on the wheel or at the stake. But the multitude, whose principles are more flexible, and whose moral courage is of a lower order, tamely submit to authority. It is clear then, that they do not feel the sacred and sanctifying influences of truth, received on conviction, and applied to the conscience. Hence, wherever there is spiritual tyranny, there is sufficient zeal for the forms of religion without any of its moral power among the mass of the community.

All this is fully recognized in the Bible: and every intelligent survey of the christian religion shows that, in its whole structure, it presupposes freedom of inquiry.-- When Jesus presented himself as the promised Messiah, he required no one to admit his claims, until he had produced evidence. He appealed to prophecies fulfilled, to miracles openly performed, and to every species of evidence, which could prove his divine mission: He exhorted men to examine, and to judge according to the "testimony." And when he sent out his apostles, he instructed them to pursue the same course. They obeyed his instructions. In regard to the truths of natural religion, they appealed to the works of creation: and as for doctrines peculiarly christian, the first preachers followed, with wonderful exactness, the example of their master, in commending them to the *understanding* of Jews and Gentiles. All the primitive christians, asserted every where, the rights of conscience; and in the most fearless manner maintained them. Before the Jewish Sanhedrim, in the court of Areopagus, and in the palace of the Cæsars; in the face of authority, and in defiance of danger and death, it was all the same. They acknowledged but one Lord of conscience, and submitted to nothing else. Force could not compel, terror could not alarm them.

The first teachers, after Jesus Christ also clearly taught all others to exercise the right of private judgment; to examine the claims of every religious teacher, to discriminate between civil and religious authority; and wherever conscience was concerned, to yield to nothing but conviction of the truth.

In connexion with these remarks it may be instructive rapidly to glance over the

HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

It is needless, in attempting this task, to turn to the records of the heathen world.—Of these none to which I have had access contain any thing like a clear assertion of the principle that religion ought to be free.—The prevalent maxim was, that the religion of the state *must be observed*. The statesman, the philosopher, the historian, the poet, all taught this doctrine: and, with exceptions too few, to be particularised, all seemed to be satisfied if the precept were obeyed. Indeed I find no where among the wisest of the ancient heathens, any thing like that which we call religious freedom. This fact, when first noticed, surprised me not a little. I accounted for it, at length, in this manner.—The religion of pagan nations is all addressed to the passions or the imagination of man: it lets the conscience alone. One may easily see then that there could be, among them, no great solicitude about the right to worship the Creator, according to the dictates of conscience; when every man thought *that* to be right, which the law required. Accordingly, we find no agitating disputes on this subject during the whole history of the Grecian and Roman Commonwealths. There were, often, terrible conflicts between the people and their rulers; but none that I know of, between the people and the priests. So that I feel warranted in affirming that we owe all our ideas of religious liberty to the Bible. That book brings truth concerning our Creator, and the obligations which we owe him, home to the conscience of man; and it so carries the sanctions of religion through all the relations of life, as to make us feel that freedom of conscience is the most valuable right appertaining to human beings.

It is among christians, then, that we are to look for all sound opinions respecting that liberty of religion, of which we now speak. And if, among nominal professors of christianity, we find the most grinding spiritual tyranny, that has ever existed, we are to account for this fact only on the principle, that the free spirit of this religion has enabled wicked men to see how its full operation disqualifies men for slavery. The light of revealed truth must be shut out from the conscience, before human authority can sway it at pleasure.

In the early ages of the church, while the spirit of the apostles remained among christians, there was a mighty struggle between the rights of conscience and civil power. Every martyr, and every confessor was a fearless advocate of religious liberty. It is well known that, in process of time, christianity gained the victory over heathenism.—When Constantine mounted the throne of the Cæsars, and openly declared himself a christian, he published an edict, which deserves especial notice in the history of religious liberty. After declaring that every man should enjoy the privilege of observing the christian religion, without molestation, he adds these remarkable words. I give them in the plain translation of the worthy old Fuller.—“And for as much as this liberty is absolutely given by us to them, to use and exercise their former observances if any be disposed, it is manifest that it helpeth much to establish the public tranquility of our time, for every man to have license and liberty to choose and exercise what kind of worship he listeth. This is done by us, to the intent *that we would have no man enforced to one religion more than another,*” &c.

This is in the true spirit of the christian religion.—O si sic omnia! But after that able, but strangely inconsistent man was firmly seated on the throne, and was corrupted by arbitrary power, he employed authority, instead of truth, first for the overthrow of paganism, and afterwards, for the extirpation of heresy. He at length became virtually the head of the church, and christianity was secularized. The change which had taken place in the constitution or government of the church, from a *democ-*

racy to an *oligarchy*, and the enormous ambition of the bishops, may afford some apology for the conduct of the Roman emperor. He might have seen that unless he kept them in check, the spiritual power would domineer over the civil; and wisely have resolved to prevent this evil.—But be this as it may, after that period, as long as the empire retained any vigor, the civil authorities impeded the progress of prelatical ambition.

In the progress of events, however, the Roman power was gradually weakened: At length “that which hindered, was removed out of the way,” and the “man of sin” was revealed in the fulness of his spiritual wickedness. Ecclesiastical power gained the ascendancy.—The character of the church was entirely changed. Religion no longer addressed the conscience, but the passions.—The evils of heathenism were restored, under the name of Christianity: and the very idea of religious liberty seems to have been generally lost.

During this period of darkness, however, now and then a man was found with a mind and spirit far above that of his age, who knew and appreciated the rights of conscience, and fearlessly vindicated them against the oppressor. It would be instructive to mention these worthies, and detail their history, if my plan would admit of it. But with a general reference to history for information in relation to them, I can only introduce one or two as examples of the rest.

After Constantine had shown his determination to carry every thing in the church by authority, most who bore the christian name readily submitted. But there always have been persons resolved to own no master of conscience, but their Creator. I can here, however, as was said, notice only a few, whose strength of moral and intellectual character was such as to exert a discernible influence on succeeding ages.

Of these distinguished men, Claude of Turin, who flourished in the early part of the 9th Century, deserves to be particularly mentioned. He exerted himself much to bring christianity to its primitive simplicity; to make the people acquainted with the true meaning of the Bible, and

promote genuine piety.—The noble praise of being “the first protestant Reformer,” has been given to him. In all his writings he maintained, as a fundamental principle, that “Jesus Christ is the alone head of the church.” And as he lived long, wrote much, and sustained a very high character for piety and benevolence, his doctrine grew exceedingly. The valleys of Piedmont were filled with his disciples. There for ages the Waldenses held forth the word of life, and shone as lights, in the midst of a benighted world.

By means of these abused and persecuted people, the principles of true religion and liberty of conscience, were maintained in various countries of Europe, and the following generations witnessed innumerable martyrs to this glorious cause. In the 14th Century, the celebrated Wicliffe arose as a pillar of light in the midst of darkness. His learning, his piety, his zeal for the propagation of truth are greatly extolled. But it deserves to be noticed that he was reproached with having adopted the opinions of Claude of Turin, and the Waldenses. He maintained that the Lord of conscience only, has authority to bind it; that the Scriptures are sufficient to make men wise unto salvation; that they ought to be placed in the hands of the people; and that the authority assumed by the clergy in that age, was a most unrighteous usurpation. Wicliffe has been called the morning star of the Reformation. John Huss and Jerome of Prague were his cotemporaries. These noble men, after their departure from this earth, left a long tract of light behind them, which had not vanished, when Luther and his compeers arose to assert the rights of conscience.

The Reformers, in carrying on their great work, resorted to the principles taught by Christ and his Apostles. The foundation on which they built was the sufficiency of the Scriptures; and the right of private judgment. But, it deserves to be most distinctly stated and remembered, that in all cases, as well as those which have been particularized, as in others which my limits compelled me to pass over, the men who stood forward as champions of religious liberty, *derived their principles FROM*

THE BIBLE. It was the study of this book, and the power of its truth on the conscience, which made Luther, and Wicliffe, and Claude of Turin, and the noble army of martyrs and confessors among the Waldenses, feel the value of this mental freedom. Not a single instance has presented itself, in the whole course of my inquiries, of an exception to this general remark. This is so true, that one may observe, in general, a remarkably exact proportion between zeal for freedom of conscience, and conformity of religious doctrine to the simple truths of the Bible.—He who derived his religion from Scripture, and gave evidence of true christian piety, stood up bravely in defence of the sacred rights of mankind; while all others, whether priests or prelates, learned or rude, submitted without question or complaint to the demands of ecclesiastical authority, or endeavored to enforce them on others. It is true, that when the church asserted its supremacy over civil rulers, there were frequent cases of desperate resistance. But these arose from the determination of princes to maintain their own power; not from any wish that the minds of their subjects might be free.

Every candid man will confess that the Reformers did not carry out their own principles to all their legitimate consequences. None ought to wonder that the human mind, waking up from the slumber of ages, should be unable, at once, to break all its habits of submission, and to bear the boldness of its own conclusions.

But in addition to this, it ought to be remembered, that the Reformers, with no weapons but truth and reason, had to contend against the fires of the Inquisition, and the legions of princes. They were therefore strongly tempted to seek the protection of every potentate, who was willing to protect the Bible, and permit the people to read it.—Whether they saw that this was putting to work a moral cause, which in the end would purify the church, and emancipate the world, I pretend not to determine. But they certainly judged correctly, when they judged that it was better that the cause of the Reformation should be protected by civil rulers, than that christendom should continue in subjection to the fearful, spir-

itual despotism, what had been so long established. Civil rulers were willing enough to assume authority over ecclesiastical affairs. Nor is this surprising. They had suffered so much from the tyranny of the clergy, that the wisest of them were willing to break their old fetters, and they might apprehend that the "new religion" would forge new chains for them, unless they should subject its ministers to their authority. We may then, easily account for the conduct both of the Reformers, and of protestant princes. After a fearful struggle, protestanism, in the countries which embraced the doctrine of the Reformation, was established by law; and the contest was brought to a close before the work was rendered complete.

This may have been the best thing, which the times permitted. It is certain that the agitating effects of the Reformation went through the greater part of Europe. There were multitudes of protestants in Southern Germany, in Italy, in France, and even in Spain. But in all those countries, where the civil rulers adhered to the old doctrine, and permitted the Inquisition to be established, the light of truth was extinguished, and religious slavery was continued.

At what has been called the close of the Reformation, there were many persons dissatisfied with its incompleteness; and earnestly desirous that the work should be carried farther. They were not willing that politicians should determine the creed of christians, nor that things in their own nature indifferent, and left undecided by Jesus Christ, should be enjoined and enforced by human authority. Many of these worthy men also thought that by far too much power was given to the ministers of religion, and too much deference paid to the former decisions of the church.

These differences occasioned, at length, severe controversies among protestants.—As might be expected in such contests, political considerations were mingled with religious disputes. This was remarkably the case in England; and out of them grew events of very great importance to the cause of christian freedom—such as the civil war, the death of Charles I, the protectorate of

Cromwell, the restoration of Charles II, the abdication of James II, and the glorious Revolution of 1688, under the prince of Orange, afterward William III. During the whole period of agitation, the subject of toleration, and of complete religious freedom was frequently discussed, men claimed their rights, and made many vehement efforts to retain them. Milton, Owen the celebrated non-conformist, and other writers, down to the time of Locke, were able advocates of religious liberty.—The result in England was the passage, under William III, of the Act of Toleration. But in all this course of events, it is instructive to observe that every advantage gained to the cause of freedom of conscience, was gained by the labors of religious men. Hobbes the sceptic was a zealous advocate of arbitrary power, while Milton, Owen, and Locke, were believers. It deserves also to be remembered, that Locke, who is said to have written “the ablest work which has ever appeared, in favor of religious freedom,” was a member of the University of Oxford, and of Christ’s Church, while Owen was Vice-Chancellor of the University, and Dean of the College.—But the case of these distinguished men, shows how difficult it is to get rid of settled opinions. It was before observed, that the protestants, in contradiction to the fundamental principle of the Reformation, acknowledged the claim of the civil magistrate to prescribe the religion of the state. This concession, extorted by necessity, was soon regarded as a matter of right. And even Locke himself could not wholly emancipate his mind from prejudice. For although he wrote the following words—worthy of his great reputation—“it is not declarations of indulgence, nor acts of comprehension, that can cure the distempers and miseries of the State; but **ABSOLUTE LIBERTY, JUST and TRUE LIBERTY, EQUAL and IMPARTIAL LIBERTY is the thing that is wanted.**”—yet he maintains that there are cases in which the civil magistrate may punish men for religious opinions.

It is evident, that the non-conformists in England were not universally satisfied with the Act of Toleration. The writings of many of them show that their principles went

much farther. But the settlement of this country, chiefly by men, who fled from religious intolerance in the old world, was the most important event, except the Reformation, after the establishment of *the great spiritual tyranny*. These first settlers of the United States had indeed the spirit of their age, yet they were generally men in advance of the times. And attempts made by the mother country, not only to establish the religious polity of England, but even to enforce the Act of Uniformity in the Colonies, aided greatly the cause of christian liberty. Before the Revolution there were thousands of christians in the Colonies, who had arrived at the conclusion that in regard to religion, the civil magistrate has *nothing* to do but to protect the citizens in that form of worship which he prefers, and secure to him perfect liberty of conscience. Indeed, the great political event, to which I have just referred, was hailed with joy as much because it opened the prospect of complete deliverance from spiritual tyranny, as because it secured the people of this country from civil oppression. At an early period of the Revolution, the attention of various denominations of christians was turned to this subject. And the politicians, who framed the fundamental laws of these new states, only expressed the wishes of a christian people, when they inserted provisions for the perfect security of *complete* religious liberty. Indeed, the very style of some of the most famous of these celebrated enactments was in exact accordance with that which christians had previously employed in writing on the same subject. It was only in one or two cases, that any denomination had to alter its church constitution, in accommodation to the new order of things established in this country. And it agrees better with the truth to say, that *forms of political government* were framed in conformity to principles received by the most numerous classes of christians among us; than that the converse of *the same place*. Our noble forefathers, in many petitions and memorials, written with singular ability, demanded the establishment of **ABSOLUTE LIBERTY, JUST AND TRUE LIBERTY, FULL AND IMPARTIAL LIBERTY.** *in the proper sense of these terms.*

Since that period, the only change which has taken place among christians, has been in the extension, and strength of the conviction, that perfect freedom of conscience is the birthright of man; and that true religion flourishes most, when it is left to its own resources. That government must let it alone; and neither interfere with its prescriptions, nor attempt to enforce its doctrines.

But in the present period, some right curious and surprising things have happened. It is necessary to notice these, that the actual state of affairs may be understood.

In the first place, the men, who most zealously maintain the very principles of the celebrated advocates of christian liberty in former ages; who have been its steady friends in the hour of trial and danger; who have never spared their blood or their treasure in defence of their birthright, and their country's honor, are subjected to the odious suspicion of a plot to overthrow that liberty, which they or their fathers fought to establish; and are loaded with reproach, because they are thus, without evidence, suspected. Some who have borne, or who yet bear a part in the councils of the country, and to whom its interests are confided, safe in the privilege of office, and in places where they knew that there was no opportunity of reply, have been willing to propagate these reproaches. Instead of endeavoring to conciliate, and to increase the attachment of christians to the institutions of the country, a very large proportion of the whole number have been publicly denounced as hypocrites and traitors. Even old soldiers, who are spending the evening of their days in promoting those principles which made them true patriots, and in teaching their children's children to love their country, have had to bear these denunciations. This is indeed a singular state of things.—And the last year has witnessed an increase of the evil. Who can tell what will be the consequences, if the population of the country, shall be fairly divided into two great parties, the *christian*, and the *anti-christian*? Is this evil to be put off, by encouraging sectarian jealousies, and playing off one denomination against another?

But while the children of revolutionary patriots,—of

the very men whose blood and treasure secured the liberty and independence of the country, are thus assailed, it is remarkable that another class of religionists whose fundamental principles are utterly incompatible with freedom of thought and inquiry, and the right of private judgment, are making most vigorous efforts to propagate their faith in our country, and not a whisper of suspicion is heard of any danger to religious liberty from them. Their religious teachers are almost all educated in foreign lands; and are bound by the most solemn oaths, to a foreign power,—and that power admitted to be the vicegerency of heaven, with authority to bind the conscience, to oblige belief, to forgive or retain sin, and to open or shut the gates of heaven. They are supported by immense sums of money drawn from the treasuries of foreign societies, organized for the purpose of christianizing the people of the United States. They are establishing schools of every order, from the highest to the lowest for the gratuitous instruction of both poor and rich. Their institutions are rapidly increasing, at an astonishing expense among us; and their numbers are multiplying with amazing rapidity. Yet on all these topics, we hear not a single word, no not a whisper of apprehension from the *jealous guardians* of our rights of conscience. While the men, who of all in the world, have been the most stern, uncompromising defenders of religious liberty; who have always had to bear the frowns of *kings*, and the anathemas of *titled and pensioned priests*, are held up to public odium, as the enemies of our free institutions.

But of all the remarkable things presented by this fruitful age, perhaps that which most deserves the notice of the student of religion is, the zeal of unbelievers in favor of religious freedom of conscience. An infidelity too broad, and coarse and virulent to have originated in this country; an infidelity ingenerated in the moral feculence of Europe, and thrown by the convulsions of that agitated region on our coasts, is loudest and most violent, in that outcry which now stuns our ears. Foreign missionaries of misbelief and atheism, are going through the land, warning the people against the dark and traiterous designs

of American patriots and their children! Here is a new thing under the sun. From the time when the Reformation broke the fetters of the mind, and unbelief was allowed to show it self, until this age, infidelity was predisposed to be the advocate of arbitrary power. It was so from Hobbes to Hume. But since his day, there has been a change. And the men who carry on a ceaseless war against nature, who endeavor to extirpate religion, who practise no worship, and manifest no religious conscience, are clamorous on the subject of liberty of conscience. How are these things to be accounted for? What freedom of religion has ever been allowed by infidels when clothed with power?

In answer, I observe, that unbelievers have taken it for granted that christianity, like false religion, depends on the government for its support. Let legal establishments be broken down, and the church, they think, falls of course. Nor need any be surprised at this opinion.—They who suppose the gospel to be a cunningly devised fable, may easily believe that it is sustained by worldly interests. True and enlightened christians, however, fully believing that their religion is from heaven, are persuaded that it needs no buttressing from political contrivers. Its power on the hearts of its votaries is its proper support. Here, for once, however, there has been a coincidence between the plans of infidels and christians. The former, at the organization of our government, determined on the overthrow of the establishment, because they expected that christianity would fall with it: the latter because they were sure that religion would be the more prosperous for being left to itself. On all hands it was agreed that it should be free. The result has more than answered the expectations of christians. There are still alive some aged disciples, who knew what were the plans and designs of the followers of Christ in the days of the Revolution. And they now declare that the event has gone beyond their hopes—They never expected to live in times so glorious for the church. And they are, one after another leaving this world, in the full belief that if religion can only be preserved in its perfect freedom, their posterity will see yet brighter days.

But infidels are greatly disappointed and sadly vexed. The object of their hatred, instead of sinking into the dust, is going forth "clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners." The time, however, has gone by, when the power of civil government in this country can be wielded either to subdue or corrupt christianity. But public opinion rules among us; and its power is uncontrollable. When excited and misdirected, it can oppress and destroy beyond the ability of the most absolute despotism. It can nullify laws and constitutions, and break down all wholesome precedents, and turn to folly all the lessons of experience.

There is then something which seems very much like a plan to *establish* INFIDELITY in this country; not by changing the letter of the constitution, but by the power of public opinion. Hence it is, that the extraordinary efforts to build up popery in the United States are overlooked, and a ceaseless attack is made on that class of christians, who hold the very principles which made Luther, and Wickliffe, and Claude, and others, up to the days of Paul, the champions of religious liberty.—Editors of newspapers are often convenient instruments for carrying on this design.—Some are duped, some seem to be in the secret, and some propagate reproaches simply because they find them in papers which they are accustomed to copy. It is remarkable, too that the Editors, who from their *religious connexions*, cannot be ignorant of the mighty efforts which are made, and the immense sums which are expended to promote an alien religion in this country, are among the most prompt to insinuate suspicions, and throw out dark hints and propagate calumnious reports, and give caricatures of their anniversary speeches, also, respecting the designs of evangelical men.

It deserves notice still farther, that the advocates and patrons of the systematised enthusiasm, and fanaticism of the country, are dealt with in great tenderness, and often *in a half-way*, are vindicated by these same men.—While any attack made by "the *saints*" on infidelity is denounced as *intolerant bigotry*; any strong representation of the dangers of popery, is cried out against, as *persecution*; and at-

tempts to guard the community from the progress of fanaticism, are considered as positive proof of a proud, aspiring, and dangerous spirit. Indeed, it has come to this, that efforts made to diffuse information on religion through the community, and to let the people see that they have a right to judge, and are bound to judge for themselves, and that there is no Lord of conscience but the Creator, are appealed to as proof of enmity to religious liberty!

But the reader will be mistaken, if he supposes that these things are written either in fear or in anger. No! they are intended to rouse all christians of every name, who are resolved, that neither the cold hearted and brutal infidelity of this age, nor the dark, crouching, slavish superstitions of former ages, nor the fierce untameable fanaticism of any ages, shall control that religious liberty which the wisdom of our pious forefathers established, *in these United States.*

NO. IX.

MEANS OF PRESERVING RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

If the preservation of religious liberty is necessary to secure a general benefit to the community, it is highly important that the means by which this valuable object may be obtained, should be clearly understood. I wish therefore to express my thoughts on this subject. It is so momentous, and, if we may rely on the records of history, so difficult, that it demands most serious consideration. I wish to awaken attention, and to aid in bringing patient inquiry to bear on this great concern. It has, heretofore, more frequently roused passion, than exercised reason.

The experience of past ages teaches us many valuable lessons, and presents many painful facts in relation to this important matter. It is, indeed, when we look on bygone ages, amazing to see how from one generation to another, man has allowed his fellow to lord it over his conscience. And it rouses at once both pity and indignation, to observe how the great body of the people have tamely acquiesced.

while the tyrants of the world have tortured and murdered the men who had courage openly to plead for the rights of conscience. It is wonderful to think too, to what an extent persecution has been *inflicted*, because men would not consent that others should judge for them, and prescribe the manner in which they were to worship their Creator.

This nation is the only one on earth, which is trying the experiment of complete religious liberty. Every citizen is bound to do all in his power, that the country and the world may have the benefit of a fair trial. The process has gone on far enough to put one question beyond all doubt—and that a question of very great importance. It is proved by our experience, that it is for the true interest of religion that it should be free.—This point, at least, is fully settled.

But how, is religious liberty to be perpetuated? This is the difficulty. At present, indeed, the state of public opinion is such that no direct attempt to take away or limit the rights of conscience need be apprehended.—If there is danger at all—and if not, why the morbid sensibility which is manifested?—it arises from the operation of moral causes, the progress and tendency of which are not apparent. That there is danger from the plans and efforts of real christians in this country, I cannot for a moment believe. But that still the affair is one, which calls for vigilant attention I have no doubt. And certainly no reasonable man, who at all understands the subject, can complain of a people's being jealous of their religious liberties.

One general observation on this subject, can scarcely fail to attract the attention of every inquirer. The wonderful facilities of intercourse between all parts of the world have given an amazing increase to the mutual influence of nations. The public sentiment of the world has a freer range, and operates with a more direct efficiency on all parts of human life, than at any former period. And the liberality of our laws in regard to aliens, allows to them the most unrestrained ingress into our country, and intercourse with our citizens.—With a freeness

and frankness, characteristic of our republic, and indicative of strong confidence in the *reasonableness* of our institutions, all sorts of people, from all countries may come among us, and by speech and the press, publicly and privately, propagate all sorts of opinions among the people. Now as far as wealth, numbers, and power; as far as learning, taste and refinement operate as modifying causes of national opinion, the preponderance of influence, take the world as it stands, is, immeasurably, against our principles. On our side, we have right, and reason, and our experience as a nation, so far as it goes. If we could have *fair play* in this contest, no one would doubt the result:—for truth is mighty. But what will be the *ultimate* effects of foreign influence, I am not prophet enough to foretell. The thousands and thousands, who come here every year, bring many old habits and prejudices with them. The multitudes will be so great, that in process of time, all the established churches of Europe, will think that they ought to care for their members in the United States.— And we shall find the Pope of Rome, the Emperor of Germany, the Kings of France, and Spain, and Portugal, and England, advancing money to provide for the spiritual wants of people in the United States. Our own native population, in the meanwhile increases with such rapidity, that adequate provision cannot be made to afford them sound religious instruction. Hence great numbers of our citizens will fall under the spiritual care of foreign priests. And we shall before long see hundreds, *yes*, and thousands of missionaries, supported by the established churches of Europe, and bound to them by all the ties of interest and prejudice, itinerating in our country, and giving their own peculiar cast to the religious opinions of our people. We shall also witness magnificent displays of religious pomp; and all that splendor of worship, which have been for ages employed to captivate the imagination, and strike strongly on the senses.—And who can tell what will be the effect?

Already this work is begun. The things of which we speak are now taking place.—And the customary sagacity, the practised skill of those who have long held the mind in bondage are manifest in this whole affair.—They have

already so gained on the public mind, that they feel, at perfect liberty to pursue their measures without disguise. And as has been already observed, if any opposition is made, even in the way of argument, to the promotion of an exclusive, and intolerant religion, the effort is branded with the odious names of intolerance and bigotry.

It is some knowledge of these facts, which has induced me to undertake this labor; and to state according to my best views of the subject, the most efficient means of perpetuating the religious liberty, which we now enjoy.

1. SIMPLICITY IN RELIGIOUS WORSHIP, IS OF GREAT VALUE IN ENSURING THE IMPORTANT OBJECT UNDER CONSIDERATION.

The reader, who has not studied this subject, may be surprised that any great stress should be laid on a matter, which to him may appear unconnected with the object in view. To remove any prejudices, which may chance, in this way, to arise, I beg leave to refer to facts abundantly confirmed by history. It is notorious that immense ingenuity and talent have been employed to bring the human mind into bondage, and retain it in its vassalage.—The success of the enterprise has corresponded with the greatness of the effort. But in every instance, recourse has been had to some plan to captivate the imagination and the senses. The celebrated ritual of ancient heathenism was contrived for that special purpose. It was splendid and imposing. The temples were built and adorned with wonderful magnificence: the priests were clad in gorgeous robes; ceremonies performed with solemn pomp, were multiplied to great extent; statuary, and paintings, and poetry, and music were all employed to give attraction to religious worship; to enchant the imagination of the refined, and to captivate the senses of the vulgar. And when the spirit of heathenism was admitted into the church, and the design of subjecting the christian world to a spiritual tyranny was entertained, the same measures were adopted. Heathen rites were baptized with christian names, and the simple worship of the primitive church was exchanged for the splendid ritual of heathenism.

These facts, which might be indefinitely multiplied, may well convince the reader that there is more in this subject, than at first sight appears. Sagacious and covetous rulers would not have, in this way, expended immense sums of money, through successive ages, had it not been found by experience, that the scheme answered the purpose. In truth, the device was a master stroke of ecclesiastical ingenuity and ambition.

The reason of all this is plain from what has been advanced in a preceding essay.—Genuine religion is the effect of truth on the understanding and conscience.—When this effect is produced, man perceives his relations, and knows the nature of his obligations to his Creator. He feels that religion is a personal concern; and that he is answerable to no one, but the great Being who made him. The opinions and decisions of his fellow-man are of no authority in his estimation. “To his own master, he standeth or falleth.”—But, when the truth is buried in a multifarious ritual; when the imagination is enraptured, and the senses are fascinated, and the passions are inflamed; then the conscience is unaffected, and the moral influences of religion are well nigh annihilated. Religious worship degenerates into a mere show, and the worshippers surrender themselves to a priesthood, which will amuse them in this world, and ensure heaven to them in the next. In christian countries, where such a ritual prevails, the theatre is opened on Sabbath evening, as regularly as the church is on Sabbath morning: and it is not easy to decide which is the *best* “school of morals.” Indeed it is generally found, that the last degree of licentiousness prevails among the mass of the people, where religious shows and spectacles, constitute what is called religious worship. On the contrary, where the services are remarkable for their simplicity; where the *main thing* is a clear, distinct, forcible exhibition of truth; and there is nothing to break the force of its stroke on the conscience, *there* religion is always connected with a pure and stern morality, with general intelligence, and a stout, hardy independence of mind, well becoming a christian freeman. There will be found a people, who may be

exterminated, but not enslaved. And they will appreciate their own rights too well to endeavor to deprive others of their's.

It is said, indeed, that a naked and dry form of worship like this, may suit the cold metaphysical minds of the North, but is unfit for Southern constitutions, for the fervent, imaginative "children of the sun." But it is not so. Where was Jesus Christ born? And where did he found his church? In his age, the religion of the civilized was a splendid ritual,—and nothing more. Yet he instituted the simplest form of worship, that ever prevailed. The Apostles adhered strictly to his ordinances. They wore no shining apparel; built no magnificent temples; used no imposing liturgy; had no splendid ritual. But while christianity was achieving new triumphs every day among high and low, rich and poor, they went about in the simplest garb, and preached the plainest truths in the world.

The History of the Reformation affords another example. This great event took place, when the Romish church was, every where, in the height of its magnificence. It spread in Italy, in Spain, in France, as well as in Sweden, Denmark, Germany and England. In the latter countries it prevailed, because the sovereigns were prudent and patriotic enough to repress the Inquisition:—in the former, it was not put down, until the protestants were either murdered or banished.

In our day, too, it is the very simplest form of protestanism, which is doing most for the conversion of the heathen. The plain truths of the gospel have, already, transformed the low and sensual South Sea Islanders, into pure and intelligent christians.

It is not true, that the *common people* require a splendid and dazzling worship. They can be made christians by the pure gospel;—and better christians too, than ever were made by imposing forms of human devising.—If this is not so, then we must admit that the ordinances of Christ were defective; and that the Apostles did not labor so wisely or successfully as pope Gregory VII, or Leo X. The truth is, that the doctrines of the gospel are, chiefly, plain facts, which can be well understood by plain people.

And the artless narrative, the familiar illustration, the simple pathos of the Bible, commend it to the understandings and hearts of unsophisticated men; so that with them, it is the most popular book in the world. It is true, that if the people are to be kept in ignorance, that they may be fit instruments for the artful and ambitious, then some device either refined or coarse, according to prevailing tastes and habits, must be adopted to excite their passions, and inflame their imaginations: But if they are to be educated, as befits members of civil society, then the very circumstance, that the teacher of religion deals with them as rational beings, capable of understanding and judging for themselves, will excite an interest, and command attention. The primitive christians, the Waldenses, the peasants of Switzerland and of Scotland, and the great body of christians at present in the United States, afford abundant proof of these important truths.

II. Correct views of christian doctrine; and especially of the terms of a sinner's acceptance with his Maker, are all important for the preservation of religious liberty.

I am perfectly aware that to many readers, this will appear strange;—perhaps extravagant. I must, therefore, beg their patience while I undertake to state the reasons, on which this position is founded. And first, an appeal is made to facts.

It is undeniable that in the christian world, freedom of conscience, and a determination to maintain that freedom, are connected with the general prevalence of a particular system of religious doctrines.—On the other hand, religious slavery is, every where, connected with the prevalence of doctrinal principles of a different and, indeed, opposite character.—I speak here of fundamental principles, not of particular modifications of minor articles of faith.

In illustration of this subject, I shall not again advert to the necessity of addressing religious truth directly to the reason and conscience, so as to give to these faculties due vigor and distinctness. But I shall select one fact, of a very remarkable character. *Liberty of conscience has never been maintained with any consistency and permanence, among any people, during the whole existence of*

the church, where the prevalent religious system did not contain the article of JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

I beg pardon for introducing this technical phraseology; it is done for the sake of brevity. But as this assertion may to many appear paradoxical, I feel the necessity of treating it somewhat copiously:—and this especially for the sake of those, who have never studied the philosophy of religion, and who have been made friends of religious freedom, rather by the *spirit of the age*, than by the influence of religious truth. I grant that there is no apparent connexion between the abstract argument, which proves the right of man to freedom of conscience, and the terms of a sinner's acceptance with his Creator. But in regard to practical effects the connexion is very intimate and very strong. It is well known to every one at all acquainted with Ecclesiastical History, that Luther, and the other great Reformers regarded the fate of the doctrine which I have mentioned, as the unerring token of stantis vel cadentis ecclesiæ, a rising or falling church; and that wherever the principles of the Reformation prevailed, this was received as a fundamental article of faith.—It has already been shown, that religious liberty was the very life of this great religious revolution. Do these two things accompany each other in the way of accidental coincidence, or are they connected after the manner of cause and effect?

Ambitious politicians have been the great enemies of religious liberty; and time serving priests have been the great instruments of gratifying their rulers' lust of power. But they could not have accomplished all this mischief in the world, unless they had devised means to subdue and crush the human mind. This bad achievement, however, was impossible without uncertainty and perplexity on the part of the people, in regard to the terms of their acceptance with their Creator. On this subject reason can afford no definite information. The case, in the very nature of it, involves the question, how has our holy Judge determined that he will treat his offending creatures? If revelation then does not make known a distinct method, by which they who "err and go astray," may obtain for-

giveness and happiness, then the mind is exposed to uncertainties the most harassing and distressing. It is this state of doubt and terrible anxiety, which gives to *priests* the great power, which they have over their fellow beings. And as long as man continues, by the constitution of his nature, a religious being, the ministers of religion will have this advantage, unless the uncertainty can be removed.

When Jesus Christ came into the world, he set this subject in a light so clear and distinct, that one might have expected the total and final overthrow of all priestly pretensions.—He did not make light of the fears and forebodings of guilty man; he did not deal in vague declamation respecting the divine mercy: nor patch up a scheme partly of repentance and partly of good works, by which to obtain the favor of the Almighty. For he knew well, that this would leave man, whenever his conscience should be wakened up, in all the painful doubt and anxiety which fit him to be the dupe of every artful and ambitious pretender. On the other hand, he did not institute an order of priests, with authority to go to the doubting sinner and prescribe what he must do to be saved. For this would be, at once, the complete enslaving of all his followers. But both He and his apostles after him, to every inquirer on this great subject gave but one answer. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” The terms are perfectly intelligible to the plainest mind.—They place no human being as a mediator between the sinner and his Saviour. They tell him to do a thing, of which his own consciousness only can give him any satisfactory information. Towards the performance of this condition, the minister of religion can do nothing at all but afford evidence to convince the understanding. In a word his only office is that of an instructor. And in this respect his *authority* goes not a jot farther than his *proofs*. It is easy for the unprejudiced mind to see how free and independent of all human authority the gospel leaves the mind of man, here, on the very strongest point of sacerdotal influence. For it ought to be understood that this is the *fulcrum* of that lever, by which the priests have

governed the world. Give them possession of this, and in spite of every thing they will exert a power which nothing can control.

The history of the church is full of instruction on this subject. And it is worth while for every one, who is at all concerned in the great interests of religious liberty, to study it carefully in reference to this very matter.— Before the spiritual tyranny of the dark ages could be established, it was necessary to make many additions to the doctrine of Christ and his apostles. The sacraments were changed from their simple character of significant actions, designed to represent the truths of the gospel, into mysterious rites, by which the duly authorized priest gave to men “assurance of grace.” Their number was greatly enlarged; and some of them at least were made necessary to salvation. Baptism and the Lord’s supper were of that number. But it was necessary before a sinner could partake of these saving rites, that he should have a conscience clear from all offences against his brethren, all charges on the part of the church. In this delicate and difficult affair, the genius of some ambitious priest invented the *doctrine of penance*. After this followed absolution, extreme unction, and last of all, purgatory. It is particularly worth while to notice how every addition to the plain simple doctrine of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, is suited to extend priestly influence. The difference is immense, as will readily appear from the following contrasts.

In the one case, the believer relies entirely on the divine mercy: no human being comes between him and his final Judge:—in the other the minister of religion assumes the functions of priest and mediator. In one case, this minister, is, as we have before said, no more than a teacher, who assists the christian to understand the gospel:—in the other, by virtue of his priestly authority he alone assures the sinner of pardon. In the one case he uses the sacraments as means of instruction;—in the other they are administered by the divinely constituted priest as certificates of grace. In one case, the christian in reliance on divine mercy through Jesus Christ, knows that he shall be saved:

—in the other, the vicar of Jesus Christ, the keeper of the christian's conscience, must tell him whether his penance is sufficient—whether his sins are retained, or remitted, whether he may hope to go directly to heaven, must pass through the fires of purgatory; or be sent to hell.—It is at the option of the priest too, whether he will grant, or withhold these blessings. It is he only who has power to bestow them. And it is the worst of all heresies to deny that power.—Admit him to be a duly authorized priest, and, whatever your sins, he can deliver you from them, provided only you will purchase enough of the *merit*, which he has to sell to make up your deficiencies. But the trembling sinner must comply with the demands of the ghostly father, or be sent directly to perdition. It is only the priest, too, who has power to pray the souls of kindred and friends out of purgatory. But some how, there is little or no virtue in gratuitous prayers. They must be paid for, or they are unavailing. The demands then of the priest must be submitted to, or one's dearest relatives ~~will be confined for ages in the fires of purgatory.~~

Surely he must be blind, who does not see that there is scarcely a limit to spiritual power, when a minister of religion is thought to have the authority to settle the terms on which a sinner may be accepted with his Creator.—And every addition to the simple doctrine of the gospel—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,”—every claim of man to the power of bestowing grace or giving assurance of salvation, is a fearful encroachment on the great principles of religious liberty.

This is a point, which, though overlooked by our statesmen, is one which must be guarded with particular vigilance. Constitutions, and laws, and philosophy and education will all be utterly inefficient to preserve religious freedom, if it is ever admitted that man, however high his ecclesiastical dignity, however distinguished his piety, has any authority whatsoever, in regard to the terms on which we may hope for salvation. *This* is the *entering wedge* of all religious tyranny. Let it once be driven in, and it will make an opening wide enough for every thing else to follow. But let christians be well instructed; let them

stand firm here, and in the nature of the case it is impossible for priests to get hold of the mind so as to enslave it. Indeed, to a christian well instructed on this point, nothing in the wide world appears so monstrously extravagant, as the claim of men to the office of the *priesthood*.

One, who has just views on this subject, cannot but admire the wisdom and goodness of Jesus Christ in the provision made by his doctrine to secure man's dearest rights. He goes as far as any one can go, in favor of religious liberty; and stops precisely at the right place. He makes all religious responsibility refer solely to the Creator. He thus recognizes the nature and obligations of man as a religious being, and secures the only freedom which he can claim, or ought to desire, freedom from human authority.*

This important subject presents itself under another aspect somewhat different, but not less interesting. It has been before remarked that when christians take the simple doctrines of the gospel, they are left in no uncertainty as to the ground of their acceptance. A man's faith is a matter of his own conciousness, and the proper fruits of faith are fully within the range of his own self-inspection. It follows that he needs the aid of a religious teacher only to enable him to make up his mind as to the meaning of the Bible, and to put him in remembrance of his religious duties. Every christian ultimately *judges for himself* respecting his own spiritual condition.

But when doctrines are added to those of the bible, when human merit is brought into the account, when he is led to rely on repentance, and good works, he never can feel secure of his acceptance. He does not know whether his repentance is deep enough, and his works numerous enough, or good enough to merit heaven.— And in the hour of darkness and distress, he sends for his father Confessor, his priest, to tell him whether he is safe for eternity—to give him his certificate of grace.

* NOTE.—By *religious freedom*, our modern reformers mean, *freedom from all religion*. And thus their liberty is the slavery of sin, and a state of war against the best principles of human nature.

The more I consider this whole subject, the more I am convinced that the preservation of christian liberty is connected with the prevalence of the true and simple doctrine of the gospel.

In the next place, I lay it down as a principle of very great importance, that,

FOR THE PRESERVATION OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY, THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE SCRIPTURES OUGHT TO BE ADMITTED; AND THE BIBLE TO BE UNIVERSALLY DISTRIBUTED.

This proposition contains two parts; each so important as to deserve distinct and particular consideration.

1. *The sufficiency of the scriptures.*—It is by no means my intention to treat this subject, as a matter of controversy. The question which it involves, ought to be considered as a settled question among protestants. My only object is to state the effects of the principle on the all important interests of religious liberty. But it is proper to premise, that in maintaining the affirmative, I do not mean to insinuate that religious teachers, and the administration of christian ordinances are of no value. Very far from it. But I hold, that the Bible is so plain and intelligible, that a sincere inquirer may learn from the perusal of it, every thing necessary for salvation; and that if he does what he finds therein required, he will most assuredly be saved.

With this statement of my meaning, I remark in the first place, that the sufficiency of the scriptures does most clearly imply the *right of private judgment*. I am not obliged to do any thing, because my religious teacher tells me that it is my duty; but only because that great Being, who made me, and who alone has authority over my conscience, has given the commandment. And of this, I, under my responsibility to him, am to judge *for myself*. I know that *I am* to judge, because the Bible most distinctly assures me, that I am to answer for myself. The minister of religion cannot take my place at the tribunal of my holy Sovereign. If he wilfully, or through mistake, tells me to do wrong; whatever may be his punishment, I must suffer for my misdeeds. He may, indeed, afford me very important aid, in ascertaining the meaning

of many passages of the Bible. But by sound argument he must convince my understanding. He must clearly prove that scripture means what he says that it does, otherwise I am not bound to believe him. And in even this case, I do not in fact believe *him*, but his *arguments*—his *proofs*.

Here we see the reason, why ambitious churchmen have so earnestly denied the sufficiency of the scriptures. It was that laymen, in doubt and perplexity, might come to them for authoritative declarations of the terms of salvation; and for those ordinances, (to be administered by none but a priest,) without which it is pretended that there is no salvation.—When the people had been led thus far, the very place was discovered, for the doctrine of the Infallibility of the church. If the layman is liable to continual error, and must resort to his *priest*, the natural question is, what if the priest should err? And, will the pernicious effects of error be nullified, because it happens to be *priestly*? These are puzzling questions; and can be got rid of in no way, but by boldly assuming the prerogative of infallibility. My mind can perceive no middle ground, on which I can stand with firmness, between that fundamental principle of protestanism, the sufficiency of the scriptures, and the enormous claim of churchmen to infallible knowledge of the truth.

It is easy to see what a bearing these matters have on religious liberty. Ingenuity and sophistry may disguise and palliate these priestly claims; but all reflecting men will perceive that there cannot be any thing like genuine freedom, where they are admitted.—If the Bible is so constructed, that a plain honest man cannot learn from it, what he must do to be saved:—And if the religion of the Bible is such, that although this man does what the Bible tells him to do, he *will* not be saved, then he is so dependent, that the *priest* can exert over the *man* an uncontrollable influence. Nor can this be prevented, supposing these claims to be sustained by scripture, in any possible way, but by resorting to the desperate expedient of destroying christian feeling altogether.

There is another very interesting view of this subject.—The doctrine of the sufficiency of the scriptures, as stated

above, has a very powerful influence, in exciting the minds of the people, and bringing into exercise their reason and judgment in matters of religion. They are taught to believe, that their everlasting felicity depends on *their* knowledge and belief of the truth. The whole power of religious feeling then is put forth, to waken up their understanding, and induce them to examine with great diligence, and form their conclusions with great caution. The indirect effect of this is seen, in the general intellectual improvement of the people; and in the strictness with which they scrutinize the doctrine of their religious teachers. It is manifest, also, in the spirit of independence, every where exhibited by christians of this class.— They learn to think and judge for themselves. The effect is also seen in the style and fashion of the instruction given by the ministers of religion. They recognize the right of the people to judge for themselves; they *discuss* religious truth, and claim authority for nothing but reason and evidence. Whereas, among christians who reject this great principle, there is, just in proportion to the extent to which they go, a submission of the understanding to the authority of the clergy, and a reliance on them for the hope of salvation, incompatible with true religious liberty. And the religious teachers either put off their hearers with *dogmatic* declamation; or refer to this and the other *dictum* of a bishop; or this and the other decree of a council, instead of showing the reason of the case, or proving the meaning of the scripture cited as authority. So true is this, that an intelligent person, who has observed these things with care, need only hear an ordinary discourse from a religious teacher, to determine whether he admits or denies the complete sufficiency of the scriptures.

It also deserves to be borne in everlasting remembrance, that the matter in hand is closely connected with the moral influences of religious truth. He, who claims and exercises his right of private judgment, and feels that, without the intervention of another, he is responsible for himself alone to the Judge of all, will be much more likely to apply the truth which his understanding has embraced, to his conscience and manner of life, than he, who relies

greatly on the decisions, and the administrations of his priest for his salvation.

2. But let us in the next place consider the effects of the *universal distribution* of the scriptures. A book of so much importance as to occasion great efforts, and considerable sacrifices to send it to every family, will excite very general attention. It will probably cause thousands to learn to read, who otherwise never would have made this most valuable attainment. There will be, at least, a general acquaintance with its contents. And it will soon be learned, that all authority as far as christianity is concerned, is vested not in man, but in the Bible. A christian teacher will be very cautious how he adds any thing to the doctrine of Jesus Christ, or takes any thing from it, when he knows that the people to whom he ministers daily consult the Bible, to ascertain what Jesus taught; and have become familiar with the contents of that sacred volume, just as it is, "without note or comment;" and are required to judge of his instructions, and reject them if they are not contained in the scriptures. He will scarcely venture to assume authority over the consciences of his flock, when he is well aware that they have learned from the Bible, that they are responsible to their Creator alone. He will not presume to prescribe rites and ceremonies as essential to salvation, when apprised of the fact, that every man, who hears him, perfectly knows that the Bible contains no such thing.

In a word, THE HOLY SCRIPTURES FORM THE GREAT CHECK, which the people have on the teachers of religion: and it is impossible for the latter to exert undue influence on the former, when the Bible is in every man's hands, and its contents fixed in every man's memory. This broad and bold assertion is founded, not only on the preceding reasoning, but on all the facts in ecclesiastical history, which bear on the case. The only religious freedom in the world is enjoyed in countries, where the Bible is in general circulation.—And it is indubitable, that there is no semblance of christian liberty, where the sufficiency of the scriptures is denied, and the Bible is taken from the laity.

It is also worthy of especial note, that the sagacious contrivers of that stupendous system of spiritual tyranny, which for ages enslaved christendom, found it necessary in the accomplishment of their purposes, to deprive the people of free access to the scriptures:—And this, too, in violation of one of the plainest precepts of the sacred volume. At first, indeed, when copies of the Bible, on account of the expense of transcribing, could be procured only at a great price, and of course were out of reach of the common people, it was enough, by allegorical and mystical interpretations, and by intermingling with all scripture doctrine the inventions and traditions of men, to mislead the multitude, and subject them to the authority of the church. But when the art of printing was invented, and the Bible was brought within the reach of the common people, then the decree was passed, that the scriptures should be reserved for the clergy. It was enough for the common people to be told by their *priests*, what they must believe and do! This system is kept up, wherever there is sufficient authority to sustain it. In Spain and Portugal, the Bible is the rarest of books. And every one knows what religious tyranny prevails in those devoted countries.—In Spanish America where the revolution has not secured religious liberty, there are no Bibles. In Russia, where a Bible Society was spreading light through the land, the despots who govern the country became alarmed, and suppressed the Institution. This act of tyranny was instigated by the nobles and the priests. Tyrants civil and ecclesiastical, petty and great, are every where afraid of the influence of the Bible. Facts, like these, might be indefinitely multiplied.—I repeat it, the present and past state of the world may be examined, with the utmost attention, and no instance can be found of the prevalence of a well sustained religious liberty, where the Bible as a sufficient rule of faith and holy living, is not generally known to the people. And just in proportion to the extent to which the holy scriptures are diffused, without note or comment, among the mass of the population, are the rights of conscience maintained.—These facts so numerous, and occurring under such various circumstances, surely cannot be mere coincidences.

In presenting them in this form to the public, I wish that the venerable statesman to whom these Essays are inscribed, and to whom I love to acknowledge my obligations for his important services in the cause of religious freedom—I wish him to know, that apart from the religious blessings, which the friends of the Bible Society design to communicate, they also love that noble Institution, and mean, through evil and good report, to sustain it by their money and their personal labor, because they are fully persuaded, that the *Bible is the most efficient support of that liberty, which his labors so materially aided, in procuring for the people of this country.*

NO. X.

MEANS OF PRESERVING RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

In prosecuting the interesting subject which I have undertaken, I have to observe in the next place, that

IN THE PRESERVATION OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY, IT IS HIGHLY IMPORTANT THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH SHOULD BE IN THE HANDS OF THE PEOPLE.

It has been no part of my design, in this series of essays to engage in controversy.—And I must here enter my protest against the suspicions of sectarian jealousy. Let christians manage the affairs of their own particular societies as they please; so long as the different denominations shall manifest towards each other a liberal spirit, I shall quarrel with none. My only object is to state general principles on a subject in which the whole community has a deep interest.

The church constitutes a society, which exists in the midst of another society. It has its constitution, its laws, its officers, and its various important interests. It is divided, indeed, into several denominations, which have their own peculiar views; and which, at the present time, are sufficiently jealous of each other. But any very large class of christians, may, and certainly will exert a considerable influence on society, by means of their strict union, the general agreement of their views and plans, and the powerful motives which operate on them. No

considerate man can view such an association with indifference.—If a few individuals can excite and wield such vast masses of human beings, they can in times of general commotion, operate with wonderful power on the interests of a nation. This single remark will show that the subject before us is of no trifling character.

It ought, however, to be understood, that it was never the intention of Jesus Christ, that his church should be *imperium in imperio*, a government within a government, in the proper meaning of that phrase. His “kingdom is not of the world.” His empire is in the hearts of men: his sole object is to make them truly good and pious, that they may be prepared for eternal felicity. The accomplishment of this purpose is the consummation of his benevolent designs towards them. He interferes with none of the established relations of life: men may be rulers, citizens, husbands, parents, children, masters, servants.—He only requires that in all these relations, they should act with the justice, integrity, fidelity, kindness, which the relation requires.

Yet it is certain that the precepts given by Jesus Christ, enjoin many of the very same actions, which are commanded by human laws. As an instance, it may be mentioned, that all the obligations of justice in our transactions with our fellow men, which the laws of civil society enforce, are fully recognized in the precepts of the christian religion. But the difference is this. Civil government compels men to perform the actions which it requires; and punishes them if they do the things, which it forbids. Jesus Christ, on the other hand, only tells men *what* they ought to do; and gives the reasons *why* they ought to do it:—And then leaves them to act as they think proper. If they “patiently continue in well doing,” they shall enjoy peace of conscience, and all the pleasures of a virtuous life. But if not, they are only disavowed as the disciples of Christ. All their civil rights and privileges continue just the same: their liberty of conscience is undisturbed. Jesus Christ does not propose to reward or punish, until the present life shall have passed away, and civil government has no longer any thing to do with man. A due regard to the precepts of christianity cannot, then,

occasion any interference with the legitimate objects of civil government.—One, or both must go out of their proper course, before they can come into collision. At the same time, it is undeniably true, that all the direct and proper influences of this religion, accord most perfectly with all the just purposes of our civil institutions. If it is the great design of human government to protect life, liberty, and property, by wholesome laws; then, surely, that religion, which writes on the human heart the law of love; and which requires that men should “do justice and love mercy,” is well suited to promote this design. All the mischief which has ever been done under the name of christianity—and I admit it to have been very great—has been done by its perversion and abuse. Ambitious and designing men have misdirected, and misapplied the influences of this religion. It is true that sincere and well instructed christians will never commit such abuses. But many are *sincere*, who are not well taught: and many, whether instructed or ignorant are not sincere. Many are christians only in part. And it is unwise to expect perfection in men partially good.

It also deserves to be repeated, that from the very nature of the case, religion is susceptible of abuse. It takes hold of all human duties. It is designed to *influence the feelings and conduct* of men, in all the relations of life. The character of its ministers is therefore a matter of general interest; and an intelligent man cannot be indifferent in regard to the power with which they shall be invested in the christian society. Wherever there is a clergy they will have influence. From the nature of the case, this is unavoidable. In this situation, the best of men need checks and guards, to preserve them from temptation. And bad men ought to be kept out of the sacred office, by removing as far as possible every motive, which might prompt them to seek it. And it is a question of much importance, “how may this be effected, in such a manner that the ministers of christianity may accomplish all the good, which the founder intended.”

Some in our country would adopt the expedient of discarding religious teachers altogether. But this cannot be done consistently with our principles of religious liberty.

Because there are thousands of American citizens, who choose to be preachers of the gospel; there are millions, who choose to employ them in that office; and there is no power in the government to pass laws restraining this choice. Whether the noisy declaimers about religious liberty in and out of Congress, wish for this power, I will not hazard a conjecture.

The plan which others have adopted, and are endeavoring to execute is, to produce as before intimated, such a change in the public opinion of this country, that the people shall determine to do without religion; and of course, without its ministers. This last expedient has been so often tried, that we can now, without pretending to be prophets, certainly predict its failure. It may, indeed, so far succeed as to enlist some dissipated young men, some profligate husbands, who hate the restraints of their marriage vows; and perhaps here and there a female whose mind has become utterly polluted. But that religion, which had power to resist the genius of Bolingbroke, the subtilty of Hume, the wit of Voltaire, and the strong coarse ribaldry of Paine, to mention no more, will hardly yield to the desperate assaults of the male and female foreign missionaries, who, in the fury of their anti-christian zeal,

Rave, recite, and madden round the land.

We shall, after all, have religion; and that religion will be some modification of christianity. We shall, of course, always have ministers of the gospel: their numbers will increase: and their influence will be extended. We wish them to do the good which their Master intended; and with equal sincerity, we wish to prevent the evil which always follows an abuse of their influence.

But to be guarded against this evil, we must understand by what means, in former times, clerical men gained power. And in prosecuting inquiries of this kind, it will occur to every reader of ecclesiastical history, that after the christian society had grown to be important on account of its numbers, the ministers of the gospel, *claimed the right of governing the church, by virtue of official authority derived from Jesus Christ.* I wish here to observe, that as far as this is a question of dispute among different

denominations of christians, I have nothing to do with it. Let them settle the matter among themselves. I am considering the subject simply as a matter of history.

To make it entirely plain, it must be observed that the government of the church includes, the admission of members into the christian society, the exercise of discipline over them when admitted; the exclusion of them, when refractory; and the use of all suitable means to extend the influence of this society. It ought also to be borne in mind, that the officers in this society have claimed, and do still claim the exclusive right of appointing their successors. Among the Roman Catholics, besides all this, clergymen are bound to celibacy. The design of this relation is doubtless to separate them as much as possible from all the influences of civil institutions, and promote among them to its utmost extent, the *esprit du corps*.

Let us apply common observation, and common sense to this case. Suppose then that a great association is formed consisting of many hundreds of thousands of persons; and that officers are appointed. These officers claim the sole right of training, and appointing their successors forever; of admitting or rejecting members, and casting out those whom they think unworthy, without any appeal from their decision.—Now who does not see, that the yielding of this claim, will give to these officers an entire control of the society?—If, in addition to all this the rulers of the association claim the right of interpreting the laws, it is difficult to see how their complete ascendancy can be prevented. If the governors of the several states held their offices for life, with the power of appointing their successors, and all magistrates, sheriffs, and other officers, and of deciding in the last resort on the meaning of every law of the land, what would be the value of the civil liberty which would remain to us?

It may be thought, indeed, that, seeing the church has no power, as the civil government has, to coerce obedience, to impose taxes or fines, and inflict corporal punishments, the whole of the claim put in by the clergy does not amount to much. It is true that, in civil society, a ruler without this power would, after all, be only a man

of straw. But in ecclesiastical affairs, the case is widely different. Every intelligent believer of the Bible sees that it is his duty, a duty enjoined by the founder of christianity, to become a member of the church. The ministers of christianity, in discharge of their official services, are obliged to insist on the performance of this duty. The blessings provided by this religion are promised only to the members of the church. One cuts himself off from the hopes of salvation, and contracts great guilt, by refusing to unite with the christian society. Here there are millions of persons, who acknowledge that they are bound by the authority of Jesus Christ to become members of his church: and yet the officers of the church, with the exclusive right of appointing their successors, claim the sole authority of admitting or rejecting all applicants for church membership; and excluding all members, whom they may judge to be unworthy!

But that the reader may have fully before him the means by which clerical power has been acquired, and religious tyranny established, let him recollect some former statements: It was taught that the sacraments are necessary to salvation. But duly authorised priests only can administer them. These same mysterious rites, in the hands of priests, confer grace; and are certificates of grace. In the Romish Church, it is also held and taught, that the value of the sacrament, when administered, depends on the *intention* of the administrator. If he does not *design*, when he baptizes your child, or gives you the Lord's supper, to confer grace, you and your child may go to perdition, although these signs and seals of divine mercy have been applied. It was by urging claims of this kind, that christian ministers, acquired that power over the members of the church, which enabled them to bring the human mind into vassalage, and bind the conscience as with fetters of iron.

Here then, if there is now, or is likely to be hereafter, any danger to the religious liberty of the people of the United States, is a point to be carefully observed and strongly guarded. No man is so foolish as to imagine that unbelievers can be brought under clerical influence.

so as to submit to an establishment of christianity. The men of this world *may*, in the changes which are taking place, find an establishment of religion convenient or necessary to subserve their purposes; and their power and wealth may corrupt and influence the clergy. This I say *may* happen, because it has happened. But it would be the strangest of all events, if priests could find the *art* of inducing men, who despise their calling, and abhor their influence, to consent to the support of that calling, and the strengthening of that influence by a legal establishment.—The sole apprehension is, that in the United States, christians will become so numerous, that their priests will be able, by and by, to prevail on the people to surrender their liberty of conscience, and break down those institutions by which it is now secured. This must be what our politicians fear. It is certain that christianity is growing with wonderful rapidity:—and its increase is likely to become much more rapid. Every year christian enterprise takes a wider range. The success of one plan of great moral magnificence, only gives courage for something greater. The cherished design of great multitudes is, to make the whole nation, old and young, rich and poor, bond and free, wholly and entirely christian. Sanguine hopes of success animate the exertions of christians; and they are resolved never to stop, until the work shall be accomplished.—The people of this country will have aid, too, whether they ask it or not, and whether they wish it or not, from abroad. The wealth and the learning, and the practised skill of her European ecclesiastics, will be brought to bear, with great power, on the religious interests of this country.

I seem to myself to be rendering a public service, when, in the present state of our country, I point out the various means by which clerical power, and spiritual tyranny have been established: when I show that under an *esprit du corps*, which can never die, one claim after another has been urged, until without perception of the consequences, all has been admitted on the part of the people, and established either by proscription, or by civil enactment.

I feel, too, that I am supported by facts, when I say

that, for the preservation of religious liberty, it is important that the power to govern the church should be in the people, who compose the church: that they should have a judgment in the question whether a man is qualified to perform the duties of the pastoral office; who are to be admitted as members of the christian society; in what cases these members are to be censured, and in what expelled; what measures are to be adopted for the prosperity of the church and by what means they are to be accomplished; and last, though not least, what is the true meaning of that law, which Jesus Christ has given, to bind alike the greatest Doctor of Theology, and the humblest christian. Let these principles be admitted, let the Bible, [that law of which we have just spoken,] be in the hands of every christian; and let the people retain the power which they now possess, and which, I think they will not readily surrender, of paying their religious teachers, according to their own opinion of the value of their services, and it certainly will be very difficult, indeed, for the clergy to endanger the religious liberty of the country.

I certainly have a high opinion of the clerical office: and I cheerfully declare my opinion, that the clergy of the United States, taken as a body, are the purest, and the most pious in the world. Yet, with equal frankness I must state, that according to my observation, they need checks and restraints, to preserve that purity and pious zeal, which is now their most honorable characteristic. They are *teachers*; the effect produced by their labors arises from the influence, which they exert on the minds and hearts of the people. In proportion to their desire to be useful, will be the strength of their desire to have influence.—The true secret then of preventing their doing harm—as they certainly have done in times past, and ensuring the accomplishment by them of the greatest possible good, is to place them in circumstances in which they will be incapable of effecting any thing but by the humility, the charity, the piety, which the gospel requires of them, and the clear and distinct exhibition of that truth, which christianity requires.

And I make bold to affirm, that no truly enlightened, and pious preacher in this country wishes to be placed in any other situation.

In closing my remarks on this part of the subject, I wish to say, that I entirely approve of that part of the New Constitution of Virginia, which excludes clergymen from civil and political offices. And I must ask for room to assign my reasons for this opinion.

I do readily admit that clergymen are citizens; entitled to all the rights and privileges, which belong to any other citizens. And I am ready to maintain that the supreme law of the land, which shuts up every avenue of political and civil honor or emolument, from their approach, ought also to make them a compensation, in the way of exemption, by constitutional provision, from military duty, the payment of poll taxes, or something of this kind. And if this was not asked for, yet certainly justice required that it should be done. But I complain of this omission, not of the exclusion.—My reason is chiefly this. The ministers of the gospel are officers in a society of great magnitude and continual growth, with the power to appoint their own successors. For according to the practice of all churches, the *power of ordination* is with the clergy. Under their direction, too, young men are trained for the sacred office. And, moreover, in the execution of the duties of that office, there is much intimate intercourse with all classes of society; much opportunity of influencing the minds of children, their mothers, and of course their fathers. Now I do not think it advisable that a set of men, who have such peculiar opportunities of promoting the *esprit du corps*, of keeping up the same spirit, and pursuing the same designs from one generation to another, through successive centuries, should have access to all the honors and offices of the republic; that they should be in a condition to use their influence as popular officers in the christian society, to raise themselves to places of trust and profit in civil society. And I hold this to be especially true, where the church exists in perfect independence of the state; so that the civil government has no check at all on the movements of the ecclesiastical body. If the

church were a dependent body; if the civil ruler were the head of the church, and the clergy had to look to him for their living, the case might be different. But, when the people intend to keep the church and state forever distinct, they are wise to exclude the clergy from all share in the civil government.

I add, that if in the extension of religion, which as far as man can foresee, is to take place in this country, it is found easy for a popular preacher of the gospel to secure his election to places of trust and honor, there will be a strong motive for aspiring men to seek the sacred office, as a stepping stone to political distinction. In this case, corruption of the clergy, and corruption of religion, would probably ensue.

The records of ecclesiastical history seem to me to strengthen this reasoning. The society of Jesuits, by electing and training their members, from the time of its organization, to the present day, amidst the favors and the frowns of princes, when caressed and feared, as well as when persecuted and suppressed, preserved the same spirit. There is a stronger instance than this. From the year 606 down to 1830, the church of Rome, by means of this power of training men for their work, and then appointing them to do it, has with a uniformity and consistency, unparalleled in the history of mankind, pursued the same plans, and aimed at the same objects. It is only in this way, that they have been able to give sufficient plausibility to the fable of infallibility, to impose on the people.

I do not compare the protestant clergy of this country to Jesuits and popes, in any other point but the single one, of having the power to train and appoint their own successors. But while they possess this power, and can thus ensure the steady pursuit of any single object for a thousand years in succession, I cannot help thinking that it is the part of wisdom to keep them out of the halls of legislation, and the chairs of state. Let them be so situated in the country, that they can do nothing, but mind their own proper business of persuading people to be honest, charitable and pious.

The prevalence of a sound, intellectual and religious education is to be regarded among the most important means of preserving our religious liberty.

To prove the value of general education is a work of supererogation. It is universally admitted. And yet the practice of the nation is very far behind its theory. The recent inquiries and reports of agents employed in the distribution of the Bible, have brought to light facts of the most appalling character. Thousands of citizens, who vote for Legislators, and Presidents, have been found entirely unable to write their names, or even to read the charter of their liberties. This is true not only in the new states, and in frontier settlements, but even in old Virginia, and North Carolina. So that, undeniably, the measures adopted by our Legislature to promote primary education, are insufficient.

But this is not all. Experience and observation abundantly prove, that mere learning to read is an acquisition of comparatively small importance. For there are great numbers in the country, who have made this attainment, and yet they own no books, they read no newspapers: they are even heard to declare in presence of their own children, that education has done them no good. That they speak both sincerely and truly is obvious from their conduct: for they not only make no use of what they once learned; but they make no exertions or sacrifices to send their children to school.

This, however, is not the whole of the deficiency, which we have to lament. There is an immense want of that moral discipline of the young, which is of more value than all merely intellectual attainments. It is a fatal mistake, that mere information is sufficient.—Did not the young men, who lately, in the town of Salem, coldly, deliberately, in the dead of night, murdered an aged and respectable citizen, know that they were perpetrating a crime of most atrocious character? They were well educated, talented young men; yet they hesitated not to stain their souls with blood. Dissipation, and unbounded love of pleasure, induced habits, which required much money; and at the same time, produced that hardened selfishness, that callousness of conscience, which prepared them for

the deed of villainy.—But examples enough will occur to the remembrance of every reader. Verily, parents do not fulfil their obligations to their children, or to their country, when they fail to train the young in the ways of virtue. And the violence and crime, which the Journals of every day record, prove that the sensibility of the public needs to be awakened to this subject. The heart is sickened with the long catalogues of atrocious offences, perpetrated by the citizens of this country. The land is scented with blood: and our rank offences “smell to heaven.” In the meanwhile, the men, who guide the destinies of the nation, suffer such rapidly succeeding paroxysms of political excitement that they have neither time nor heart to attend to these things. And the political papers, which abound among us, serve scarcely any other purpose, than to fan the flame, which of itself burns too fiercely either for our comfort or benefit. Indeed, I have been compelled to believe, that of all the demoralizing causes which at present spread corruption through the whole length and breadth of the land, unprincipled party presses, which make a trade of political lying, are the most efficient—the *drinking of ardent spirit only excepted*. It is proper to declare, that the writer of these censures, is no politician; and of course no partizan. He votes *for* nobody; and *against* nobody. He is only a *looker-on*—an observer of events, as they are connected with the moral and religious interests of his country; and especially of his native state. And in the want of *self-government*, which characterizes multitudes among us, he sees deplorable defects in the moral training of the young; and a growing unfitness in the population of the state to sustain our free institutions. For nothing can be plainer than the proposition, that, *if the force of moral principle does not produce in a majority of the people a voluntary submission to the law, and a determination to support its authority, the government of law must soon be at an end; and the government of force take its place*. Already, there is something fearful in the spirit of violence, which is manifested; and in the familiarity, with which unfledged politicians, through the country, talk of bayonets and muskets, of blood, and death, and civil war. I therefore conclude, that

PARENTS AND TEACHERS OF YOUTH, ARE COMMITTING A SPECIES OF TREASON AGAINST THEIR COUNTRY, BY NEGLECTING THE MORAL AND RELIGIOUS DISCIPLINE OF THE YOUNG.

But again; it has already been shown that man by the constitution of his nature is a religious being, and that unless his mind is occupied, and his heart regulated by true religion, he will be under the control of some fatal error. No one, who has not a religion sufficient in all times of trial to satisfy his conscience, is free from the danger of superstition, enthusiasm, or fanaticism. Superstition had full hold on the mind, even of such a man as Voltaire, in times of alarm and danger. But the ignorant multitude are chiefly exposed to the invasions of fanaticism. This terrible excitement, however, is always connected with gross superstition. And this is always found among a grossly ignorant people. A great many events, which are every year occurring in our country, prove that already there is a fearful preparation for the adoption of most hurtful superstitions, and for the prevalence of very extravagant fanatical excitements. What must one think, when he learns that in *this country, and in this century*, CITIZENS are found, who think that the Deity revealed in the Bible, is worthily worshipped, in what is called the *laughing exercise*, or the *barking exercise*; the *jumping exercise*, or the *jerking exercise*? That such things *have been*, and even now *are*, is undeniable. How distressing, to think that acknowledged ministers of religion, encourage such extravagances: and how alarming is the fact, that *such* ministers exert an influence over citizens, sufficient to produce, I had almost said, a temporary delirium of this kind!

If men choose thus to enjoy their religious liberty, Heaven forbid that any legal restraints should ever be placed on them. The only corrective of these evils, is enlightened public opinion, produced by sound education. But the evils do exist: and they are great. They are alarming.—Because, they clearly indicate a population, already numerous, and growing with fearful rapidity, on which artful and designing men have it in their power

to operate with vast efficiency. The results of the census, now being taken, will confirm every fearful anticipation, which has heretofore troubled and distressed the christian patriot. In twenty-five years, we shall have an addition of at least thirteen millions of souls, to our present numbers. And how many of these, will be uneducated, and ready to receive any superstition, however enormous, who can tell?—The civil institutions of the country do not reach the case. If it were not so, how could there be so many uneducated citizens in the United States? But these institutions have nothing to do with *religion*. According to our theory, they must *let it alone*. And by no *direct* influence do they, in the least degree, restrain those causes which operate to undermine our religious liberties. I must repeat, *No man, however learned, is free from danger of superstitious and fanatical influences, who has not settled religious principles, of sufficient energy to bear him through sickness, sorrow and death.* Much less, then, can we count on the security of the ignorant and untaught.

The whole state of the country is obviously such as to require, for the preservation of our institutions, some new, and extraordinary efforts of christian patriots, for the prevention of evils, which the civil and political establishments of the country cannot remedy; and with some of which, they dare not even intermeddle.

While all enlightened christians were most anxious on this subject, the *great discovery*—for I cannot but call it so—of *Sabbath Schools* was made. It is the very remedy, which the genius of our institutions called for, to stop the plague of ignorance, and superstition, which was going like a destroying angel through the land.

I wish to be understood here, that I have in view the *American Sunday School Union*. I happen not to be particularly acquainted with any other association of the kind. And as I cannot speak with unqualified praise of those, which are established under sectarian auspices, and are intended to promote sectarian interests, I choose to be silent respecting them. But as for the American Union, I hesitate not to say, that in its bearing on the true interests

of this country, it is worthy to rank with the American Bible Society. For,

In the first place, it openly, and utterly disclaims sectarian objects and designs. The sincerity of this *disclaimer* is fully evinced by the constitution and all the internal arrangements of the association. One fact alone affords sufficient proof. All the publications of the society are approved by very respectable members of four or five different denominations. How then can its influence be of a party character?

2. The design of this society is to teach every child in the United States to read well enough to peruse the Bible with facility, and intelligence. Mere learning to read is not all. The work is pursued until a taste for reading is acquired; and means are afforded for the gratification of this taste. It is intended to establish a Sabbath School Library in every neighborhood from Maine to Missouri. The books composing these libraries are not pernicious novels; but little works comprising really solid information. The young person, who acquires it, will most assuredly thirst for more knowledge.

3. But this charity is "twice blest." The improvement of Sabbath School teachers is wonderfully promoted by the manner in which they perform the duties of their office.—They are obliged to explain the meaning of *words* and the nature of *things*. And thus, while teaching others to think, they learn to think themselves.—The discipline of these schools, too, is entirely a discipline of kindness. And while the teachers are endeavoring to win the affections of the pupils, they are with equal energy, though perhaps without directly intending it, endeavoring to make themselves more amiable. He must have all the cold-heartedness of a modern Reformer, who can think without emotion of seventy thousand young citizens, in this spirit, laboring every week to improve the minds and hearts of four hundred thousand children.

It is cause of inexpressible gratification, too, to know that this work is going on with a success answerable to the most sanguine expectations of the founders of this noble society. This success is seen in the improved intel-

ligence and morals of thousands and thousands of children. The only cause of regret is, that this work of love is not carried on through the whole nation. This will be more generally felt, when the fact comes to be known, that progress in knowledge is far greater in well conducted Sabbath Schools, than in the ordinary week-day schools of the country.

While writing this essay, I happened to open the May No. of the *Revue Encyclopedique*, and observed a notice of the Report of the American Sunday School Union, presented last year. This very able *periodical* remarks, that Sabbath Schools are one of the most vast and most useful of the creations of religious philanthropy. And after presenting a brief sketch of the progress of the charity, and of the numbers who partake of its benefit, the writer of the article exclaims—"What a powerful lever in the hands of the benefactors of mankind, who, with reason, regard the promotion of knowledge as the best guaranty of social order, and individual happiness.—Sabbath Schools will perhaps solve a problem, the solution of which has hitherto been sought for in vain; that of knowing how it is possible to waken up in the inferior classes the desire and the effort to enlighten themselves. And they will attain this object by one single expedient; namely, by attaching the instruction of the people to their religious belief." The Reviewer afterwards makes an estimate of the value of the gratuitous services of the teachers in the Sabbath School, at the very lowest rate at which it could be fixed, and states the amount at 4,880,000 francs, or 903,697 dollars. His remark on this subject is most just and appropriate.—"See what charity accomplishes, when it is united with profound religious connexions; a result which can never be produced by that babbling philanthropy, which *talks*, but never *acts*. In order to move such masses of men, and to attach fifty thousand individuals to a cause of beneficence, there is need of something else besides the phrases of the rhetorician."

The writer also notices the astonishing amount of the publications issued by this society, and thinks it likely that the *people* of America will have access to more ample

means of instruction, than the *members of learned Academies* in many countries of Europe. He also notices the extraordinary fact, that the voluntary contributions to the Sabbath School Union in this country amounts to almost as much as the *allowance in the budget of the French Government to primary education.*

In this way liberal and enlightened foreigners of high literary distinction speak of this society, in which some of our own citizens can see nothing but the folly of enthusiasm; and others, with a prejudice much to be pitied, only dark designs against the liberties of the nation!—It is really mortifying to an American citizen to know that learned foreigners, who have studied the history of religion, have it in their power to read the charges which are brought against the benevolent enterprises of christian charity in this country, by some of our politicians. Men, who have taken the trouble to make themselves acquainted with this subject know, that in every country of christendom where spiritual tyranny is established, the people are deprived of the Scriptures.—Yet the universal distribution of the Bible, is to destroy *our* religious liberties!—Where priests rule, the people are kept in ignorance; but *here*, that measure which will ensure the education of every young citizen in the nation, is pregnant with danger!!—Under a tyrannical hierarchy, it is an important point of policy to retain the whole of religion in the hands of the priests. But so peculiar is *our* situation, that great mischief is apprehended from an association, which employs, at present, seventy thousand laymen, as teachers of religious truth!—*Pudet—pudet!* I am ashamed that such absurdities should be uttered by men, whom the people choose to manage the interests of the republic.

But the danger is thought to arise from the fact, that Sabbath Schools are under the direction of religious men. I shall say nothing of the indifference, with which attempts to teach infidelity to the young are regarded by these jealous guardians of our religious liberties. All this may pass. Hitherto, none but zealous christians have been found, with a benevolence sufficiently energetic and persevering, to carry them out into the high-ways and hedges,

and cause them to bring in from year to year the off-caste of poverty and ignorance, and mould them into moral, intelligent, enterprising members of the community.—And it might be asked why should religious men be censured for performing a work, which no one else will undertake? But I wish to present in a prominent way this remark—*The measures adopted by the American Sunday School Union, are of great value as a means of preserving religious liberty.*

It has been shown, that instead of inculcating the peculiar dogmas of any sect, this association, with a liberality of which we have few examples, teaches only the principles of christianity, which are common to all protestant denominations.

It has also been stated, that by means of the society, both a knowledge of reading, and a taste for it, are communicated to all who regularly attend Sabbath School instruction.

Farther, it has been remarked, that the arrangement and plan of this institution accustom the *people to think, judge, and act for themselves on the subject of religion*; instead of leaving every thing to the priests.

And, what is as important as any thing else, in this way the minds of multitudes are led to form settled principles in regard to religious matters; and are thus most effectually preserved from enthusiastic and fanatical excitements. The people are put beyond the reach of any undue influence from their religious teachers. They are accustomed to *demand* explanations and proofs; instead of resting satisfied with bold assertion and loud declamation.

✓ All these statements are confirmed by facts. For, fierce and bitter as may be the hostility of infidels to Sabbath School instruction, it is exceeded by that of tyrannical priests. They hate Sabbath Schools as much as they do Bible Societies. But why; unless because their craft is in danger?

There is another view of this subject, which every man of any influence in the community ought to take. It is this—Where the interests of religion are so unconnected with the state that the civil power can place no check on

the ministers of religion, it is impossible to prevent an undue spiritual influence over the mass of a christian community, except by giving them a sound religious education. If this is not done, the necessity sooner or later will certainly arise, of *making* the teachers of religion dependent on the civil power. But when religion is connected with the principles of popular education, the people will be inspired with the strongest desire to enlighten themselves, and will make the most vigorous efforts to accomplish an object so desirable.

I conclude, therefore, that the Sabbath School system is exactly adapted to the genius of our institutions; and that the American Society, by its indirect, yet powerful influences, will prove a very efficient instrument, in perpetuating the religious liberty of the United States.—*Esto perpetua.*

NO. XI.

It has been shown that the principle of religion is common to mankind : and that, when called into action, it enters into all human concerns and relations. The character, therefore, both moral and intellectual, of its ministers, is a matter of general interest.

The *purity* of religious teachers is most effectually secured by making their situation such, that a love to religion itself will be the moving power of all who enter the sacred office. It is believed that the exercise, by the people, of the right of choosing their own pastors, and of supporting them according to their opinion of the value of the services rendered, is the best method for obtaining this object, which has ever been devised.

But the question respecting the intellectual training of men to be religious teachers, presents many serious difficulties. It is, too, a subject of greater importance than many seem willing to admit. The perfect freedom of religion, which now exists in this country, gives to this subject peculiar interest. It is an established principle among us, that one human being has no right to control the conscience of another. No matter what may be a man's re-

ligious sentiments, he has *no authority* over those of his wife and children. Indeed, the influence of our institutions is such, that to some extent religious liberty is to be found even among the slaves of the southern country. It ought to be remembered, too, that religion makes its authority bear on all human relations, domestic and social. Husbands, wives, parents, children, masters, servants, neighbors, magistrates, citizens, all feel its power, and submit to its requirements. The freedom of religion, also, necessarily implies freedom of worship. A man cannot, consistently with the principles of our country, interfere and prevent his wife and children from choosing their own religious instructions. Surely, then, it is to every husband and father a very serious question, what sort of men shall, under the character of religious teachers, have access to his nearest and dearest relatives. They who have most carefully observed the effects of various kinds of religious teaching on both the understanding and the heart, will regard this subject with the deepest solicitude. In one single day, the powerful agency of religion has often produced a total transformation of character. I have known cases, in which a wife, or a daughter, has left home in the morning, in the state of mind common to all in this country, who have never given much attention to religion, and has returned in the evening, a complete enthusiast, or fanatic. The husband, or father, thunder-struck at the change, and perhaps irritated by what appeared to him the folly and extravagance of the case, has spoken of it in terms of harshness corresponding with his feelings. This has been thought, and called by the other party, *persecution*. The teacher of religion has encouraged his votary, (an apt scholar under such excitement)—to persevere amidst all opposition. And thus endless family contentions have been produced, by the perversion of that religion, which, in its purity, breathes nothing but love.

But farther; religion takes hold, as we have shown, of the whole of man's intellectual and moral nature; of the understanding, the conscience, the imagination, the taste, the passions. It has more power, than all other moral causes in moulding the character of man. When it takes

possession, it attracts and assimilates every thing to itself. Surely, then, every intelligent person must perceive, that the whole community has a deep interest in the question, whether the ministers of religion shall be learned, refined, and gentlemanly; or ignorant, coarse and clownish:

But there is another view of this subject, which ought to be taken by every citizen. All history proves that there is in all human things a tendency to degenerate. Nothing can check this tendency but skilful culture. The gardener, the farmer, the shepherd, know this fact by much experience. The politician, who has not learned it from his historical studies, has read to very little purpose. Of all the beings that inhabit this world, man stands most in need of improvement—*internal* improvement. *Let him alone*, and he soon degenerates into wildness, and *savageism*. They who have not examined the present state of our country, in all its departments, will not believe how much evidence it now affords of this truth. There are many of our citizens, who have already lost the *use of letters*, and of almost all the arts of civilized life, except the *art of distillation*. They can make whisky from rye, and brandy from apples and peaches—and *they can drink it*. He who looks back to the age of the revolution, and is capable of comparing the present and past, with discriminating accuracy, can see;—nay, he cannot help seeing a running down of the high-toned republicanism of our forefathers, towards *mobocracy*. The thing is as palpable as sunshine. And, beyond a doubt, the greatest danger, to which, as a nation we are exposed, is that the country will come at length to be governed, not by intelligence and virtue, but by physical power. Then, instead of a well-ordered commonwealth, we shall have anarchy with all its untold and indescribable evils.

In offering these remarks, I feel the utmost solicitude that I should not be misunderstood. I have no reference to the party politics of the day. And it must not be supposed that I am using my privilege, as a writer in a religious periodical, to bring in questions of strife and contention. But with all the lights, which my limited reading

and little observation have afforded me, I am considering the facts, that, in this country, *the people possess all the power*;—that *their numbers are doubled once in twenty-five years*:—that, *without competent, intellectual and moral improvement, it is in the nature of man to degenerate*;—and that *such is the rapid increase of our population, that it now very far outruns the means and even the desire of improvement*. In a word, with the *present* state of the country before me, I am looking at the certainty that in twenty-five years from this day, between eleven and twelve millions of persons will be born in the United States, who must, to make them fit to enjoy their birthright, receive the elements, at least, of a sound intellectual and moral education. And I do confess that I am alarmed at the probability that our character as a people will run down. But I also am most fully convinced, that the teachers of religion, apart from their appropriate functions, may, if only they themselves receive a proper education, perform most important services for that country, which protects them all in the free exercise of their religion. I speak not here of political services. From these, the reader will remember, I have shown that the official teachers of religion ought to be excluded. But,

1. Enlightened teachers of christianity are, of course, teachers of the soundest and purest morality in the world. No man can be what the gospel requires, without being a just, faithful, kind, forgiving, sober, industrious man;—a good husband, father, son, neighbor, citizen, and friend. According to the Bible, there can be no substitution of one duty for another; no compromise with the Almighty to accept of religious feeling for the discharge of moral obligation. And it is the blind advocates of superstition and enthusiasm, who have perverted the religion of Jesus Christ, and turned it into a curse rather than a blessing.

2. Thoroughly educated ministers of the gospel, in discharge of their official duties, greatly raise the taste of their congregations, and give elevation to their whole mental character. This happy effect is produced not only by the frequent delivery of chaste, well composed discourses, and the correct reading and sound interpretation

of that most wonderful of all books, the Bible ;—but also by the importance, the grandeur, and glory of the topics, which they are obliged to treat. For, *as much* as superstition and fanaticism darken and debase the heart and mind of man, *so much* does true religion raise him, and purify him from all that is low, and coarse, and sensual. The minister of Jesus Christ has found the *standing place*, and the *lever* and the *power*, by which he can lift the *world of mankind* up high above earth, and bring it near to heaven.

3. The discharge of duty, by an enlightened and faithful teacher of christianity, gives a constant and powerful impulse to the minds of the people, who have chosen to employ his services ; and to their children. His visits to families and schools, his catechetical lectures, and his personal conversation, as well as his sermons, produce most admirable effects of this kind. In the nature of the case one may see that it must be so. But the decisive evidence on this subject is afforded by experience. There is no such thing as a general spirit of improvement among *the people*, where there is the want of faithful and well educated teachers of religion ; and there never has been. Instances may, indeed, be produced, where the spirit of learning wrought powerfully among what are called the higher classes, without this means of excitement. But I speak of the great body of the people—of those who make the bone and muscle and sinew of the Commonwealth—who till the soil, pay the taxes, fight the battles, and elect and support the governors of the country ; of those whose misery is the misery, and whose happiness is the happiness, of the nation. And among these, it is evident, from the records of the human race, that education never has flourished without sound religious instruction. Even in those countries, where general education is supported by the state, it has been found impossible to do any thing greatly efficient, without the instrumentality of enlightened religious teachers. It was this class of men which gave vigor and effect to the plans, which, on their suggestion, were long ago adopted, first in Scotland, and afterwards in New England. In the United States, the number of

intelligent, faithful pastors, settled through different parts of the country, affords an exact measure of the success attending the efforts made to promote primary education. The reason seems, in part, to be this. Even under the most free institutions—where the road to honor and political distinction lies wide open—in the nature of the case, comparatively few can obtain place and power. If all conditions were equal, there are many thousand chances against any individual's becoming a member of Congress, for instance, to *one*, that he will be raised to that very important station. But every one knows that exceedingly remote, and faint probabilities have, in all ordinary cases, very little exciting power. The number of candidates in a single county, for the state legislature, is often double, and even quadruple the number of candidates for Congress, in a district containing four or five counties. Not because the ambitious desire is weaker, but the probability of success is diminished. Man is never roused to seek that which he never hopes to obtain. What effect has the *openness* of public honors produced on the thousands in our country, who can neither write or read?

It deserves to be remarked, too, that Legislative enactments, and even the most abundant provision of means, will not reach this case. The wise man has long ago told us, that it is a vain thing to put a price into the hands of a fool to buy wisdom, when he has no heart to it. And all experience confirms the maxim. There must be a wakening up of the people to desire knowledge, or they will not seek for it. Parents must know its value, or they will not make exertion and practise self-denial, in order to educate their children. The young must be excited, or they will not give up the sports of childhood and youth, for the sake of study. But who is to produce this excitement; who is to waken up this love of knowledge? The state of schools from the highest to the lowest, in this whole southern country, shows that the question is one of great importance. Virginia does not send as many of her sons to College as little Connecticut. North and South Carolina and Georgia do not furnish as many students as Massachusetts, Alabama, and Mississippi are behind;

Rhode Island. But if this inferiority in the number of students is not thought decisive, it may be farther observed, that pecuniary difficulties affect the interests of education much more in the Southern than in the Northern states. This remark is made on a comparison of the times of greatest pressure in different parts of the country. The difference is thus explained. In *hard times*, when men are obliged to curtail expenses, the curtailment is first made in matters regarded as least necessary. In the southern country, it falls first, as a general thing, on the various sources of information—schools, books, papers, &c. While in other parts of the United States, these are the very last things given up, except the absolute necessities of life. Where education is duly appreciated, families deny themselves the use of sugar in coffee, butter on bread, meat with potatoes, rather than withhold good learning from their children—and children cheerfully submit to such self-denial, rather than not have the benefits of education. I know that these are extreme cases. But I put them for the sake of asking, who, in all our complaints of hard times—who of our southern planters, deny themselves the use of their daily stimulants, or lessen the loads of meats under which their tables groan, or stint themselves in any indulgence, that they may be able to send their children to school? But surely, time need not be spent in endeavors to prove that the interests of education languish among us. The fact stares us in the face. And the question returns—how are the people to be excited to regard this subject according to its importance?

For myself, I know of no plan so efficient or so cheap, as to employ the services of well educated ministers of religion. As long as the people keep in their own hands the right of choosing, and of dismissing them—the power to make contracts with them for services to be rendered, and of supporting them in the way they think proper, no danger need be apprehended from ecclesiastical influence. They who furnish men their bread, always have the power to govern them. Any community, then, for a very trifling expense to each individual, may have, if they will, the services of a man of high moral character, of

taste, of learning, whose whole business, throughout the year, is to rouse up the minds of the old and young, and in various ways afford instruction to people of all classes and conditions. Any one may satisfy himself that this is not idle speculation, by comparing two different neighborhoods, in one of which, the people, for two or three generations, have enjoyed the benefit of an able, well educated religious ministry; and in the other, they have been all the time destitute of this advantage. In the one, the interests of education flourish—the standard of morality is high—habits of economy, industry and order, are firmly established—and there is general prosperity;—in the other, schools are neglected—gross immorality prevails—habits of indolence, dissipation, and extravagance are confirmed—and the work of ruin is well nigh accomplished.

In every view, then, which can be taken of this subject, the right education of the ministers of religion is a subject of immense importance. Wherever religion is established by law, the government has always taken the management of this thing into its own hands, and made provision for the case, according to its own discretion.-- In this country, where religion is free, and where

Who will may preach, and what he will,

the case is one of great difficulty; and I must beg room for further remarks on it.

NO. XII.

It is necessary for me often to repeat the idea, that religion is a subject of universal interest. Every christian feels it to be paramount to all others. And *anti-christians* have much concern in the character of the religious population about them: for instance, whether they are ignorant or educated; mild, gentle and benevolent; or rough, fierce and fanatical. But the character of religious people, depends very much on that of their religious teachers. Hence the education of the ministers of religion is really a subject of general interest. The state of things, however, is such in this country, that this important concern must

be let alone altogether; or, they who consider its bearing on society, and appreciate its value, must take it in hand, and control it according to their sense of propriety, and their views of its importance.

If it is let alone altogether, religious teachers will generally be untaught men, impelled by some fanatical or enthusiastic excitement, to enter the sacred office; while the few, who feel the absurdity of undertaking to teach, without previous learning, will find scanty and very imperfect means of making the preparation, which they feel to be necessary. In this way, society will lose the benefits already shown to arise from a learned ministry, and suffer, at least, many of the evils which grow out of ignorance, enthusiasm and fanaticism among some, and infidelity, among other classes of society.

But if, to avoid these evils, christians and they who love christianity using that freedom which the laws of the country secure to all, take hold of this important subject, the question arises, in what way may it be best managed to secure all attainable good, and avoid all the evils? which grow out of the abuse and corruption of religion. This subject has for a long time been one of anxious inquiry among the ablest men in the various christian denominations of the country. The Revolution placed all the churches in a new and singular state. It was a matter of general agreement that church and state should be forever separated, and that religion should be thrown on its own resources. During the tug of war, all hearts and hands were occupied with one object. But when that struggle was over, and the blessings of peace and of regular government brought prosperity, the tide of population began to rise and flow with unexampled rapidity. And before christians were fully awake to the subject, it was seen that great numbers were almost entirely without religious instruction. The Sabbath was well nigh forgotten, and in many places, the people had no houses for public worship. In this case, what was to be done? Could christians, believing that the religion revealed in the gospel, is more valuable to man than all other blessings, remain inactive? Allegiance to Heaven and to their country for-

bade. But, however alarming the state of affairs might have been, none regretted that religion was free; none thought of asking the government to take the church under its patronage. There was a gradual rousing up of all denominations, and a very serious consideration of the important question, was by circumstances urged on them.

In regard to the supply of suitable religious teachers in competent numbers, several plans were proposed.—Some thought it best that young men who wished to become ministers of the gospel, might, after obtaining a preparatory education at the literary institutions of the country, pursue their professional studies with private pastors.—Others were of opinion, that professorships of Theology might be connected with the Colleges, which had been founded, chiefly or entirely by the different denominations of christians.. While a third party maintained that it was best to establish separate Seminaries for theological education. I cannot, here, detail the arguments and objections, advanced in the discussion of this great subject. The leading objection to the first plan was its *inefficiency*. Pastors generally have small libraries, and very little time to spare. And young men, studying alone, are under very little intellectual excitement. The second plan was opposed, as far as I am informed, principally on these two grounds.—1. Colleges founded by particular denominations, were chartered by the Legislatures as institutions for *common* benefit: that is, places of education to which all citizens might send their sons, without any reasonable objection, on the score of sectarian influence. It was, therefore, thought improper for any particular denomination of christians, to make three or four professors, and fifty or a hundred theological students, a part of an institution designed for general use.—2. Theological students cannot attend to many exercises particularly appropriate to them—such as their daily devotions—so well, in connexion with a College, as apart to themselves. The majority of those who took an interest in this subject, determined therefore to establish Seminaries exclusively for theological education. I know of none, however, which exclude theological students of any christian denomination. The benefits expected from this plan are such as the following:

1. An extended and permanent interest in the suitable education of ministers, arising from the establishment of permanent institutions.

2. The good effects produced on the minds and hearts of students arising from the fact that they are under the notice of the public, and the *surveillance* of the church.

3. The facilities afforded for the cultivation of ardent piety, fervent fraternal love, and enlarged benevolence.

4. The promotion of liberal views and feelings by general mental cultivation, and by access to large libraries, containing the standard works of all denominations of christians.

5. The advancement of theological knowledge, in proportion to the progress of general improvement in the country.

6. The formation, in process of time, of a theological literature of our own.

But my limits do not allow a full consideration of this subject. Every particular here stated affords room for copious comments. I must, however, satisfy myself with a few general observations.

No human institution succeeds well, unless it is under the notice and control of those, for whose benefit it is intended, and by whose money it is supported. Now the ministry of the gospel is intended for the benefit of christians, and of those, who, in the way appointed by Jesus Christ, may become christians.—There is, therefore, no one thing which, from the nature of the case, can be more a matter of interest to the universal church, than the education of religious teachers. This whole subject ought, then, to be kept open to the public, and conducted under their continual inspection. They ought to see what methods of education are pursued, and what habits, intellectual and moral, are formed in places of theological learning. And if gentlemen of talents, and influence, who belong not to the church, would show that they have their eyes on these institutions, it would be so much the better. But this cannot be, if young men are trained in private for the sacred office.

It also deserves to be remarked, that the interests of true

religion, and of society in general, require that ministers of the gospel should be men of enlarged minds, and liberal views. Many of the circumstances, however, in which ordinary pastors are placed, have a tendency to produce a contrary effect. This is a great objection to private theological education. But when numbers of young men, prepared by previous liberal studies, are brought together, from East, West, North and South; are excited by numbers; are looking to various parts of the world, as the theatre of their future labors; are daily consulting books of all sorts, and learning the arguments by which all denominations of christians, and anti-christians, too, support their opinions, how can they help having enlarged views and liberal feelings?

And here I must be permitted to correct a mistake, into which, there is reason to believe, that many have fallen. It is, that the instruction given at Theological Seminaries, is, of course, all sectarian—that at a Presbyterian institution, for instance, the professors are generally, if not always employed in teaching their students, why they ought to be Presbyterians, and not Episcopalians, or Methodists; or Baptists, &c. Now I have carefully inquired into this matter, and am fully prepared to say that it is not so. A few facts given on the best authority, will set this subject in a true point of light.—In the first place, taking the entire religious system of all these denominations, in ninety-nine points out of a hundred, there is a perfect agreement among them. In the three years, then, usually spent in the Theological Seminaries of the country, perhaps, not more than three weeks are devoted to matters purely of a sectarian character.

But in the next place, a leading, and most important part of the studies of the Seminary, is the right interpretation of the Bible.—And whether the young men are engaged in learning the language of Scripture, or in applying to holy writ the principles of philology, they use helps afforded, and principles agreed on, by writers of all denominations. The works of Episcopalians, Lutherans, Independents, and even Roman Catholics, are in daily use, as I am told, in Presbyterian Seminaries. What better

method could be adopted to put down the narrow sectarian feeling, which has done so much injury to the christian cause?

But it is a matter of very great importance, that as Science advances, and the range of human thought is extended, the ministers of religion should be able to keep an even pace, with the best taught of their fellow-citizens. I have room for only two thoughts on this part of the subject. First: without this, preachers of the gospel will not be able to aid in the great cause of education, as it is their duty to do; and as, otherwise, they easily might do, in the exercise of their pastoral functions. Secondly: if men of learning and science in the country go far before the ministers of religion, the former will generally be infidels, in spite of all the efforts of the latter. Not that true knowledge directly makes men unbelievers.—Otherwise Bacon, and Newton, and Locke would have been infidels. But when intellectual men constantly witness ignorance and inferiority in religious teachers, they will rarely fail to think of religion itself with contempt. But the world has seen, and society has felt, enough of the desolating evils of infidelity, to make us dread its prevalence among those, who guide public opinion.

There is one other topic touched above, on which I wish for room to offer a few remarks.—It is a theological literature for our own country. As christianity ever since it has gained a place among mankind has been the religion of civilized nations, I have assumed, that it will continue to be the prevalent religion of our country. Now, although the Bible contains the whole of the christian doctrine, it cannot have escaped any intelligent observer, that the politics, the philosophy and the literature of different nations, greatly modify their systems of religious doctrine. It is not necessary for my present purpose to enter into any explanation, on this subject. We need not wonder at all, that, where religion is established by law, and is used for the purposes of government, politics should exert an influence in the application of its doctrines; and, of course, in modifying their forms. It is much to be regretted, that this should be the case: but it is even so. This gives

much interest and importance to the question, shall we be in time to come, as in times past we have been, chiefly dependent on foreign writers, for a supply of our theological literature and our books of practical religion? On many accounts, I do think this very undesirable. It has appeared, and it still appears to me highly important, both for our country and for the world, that men of sufficient ability and learning should be raised up among ourselves, to give interpretations of scripture, and expositions of religious duty, unbiassed by the influence of *foreign* establishments, or *foreign* philosophy. And our Theological Seminaries are the very places, to train and prepare men for this service. They who are continually pressed in the discharge of pastoral duties, cannot be expected to perform it.*

Now, surely, they who have manifested strong jealousy of these institutions have not maturely considered this subject. They do not know that christians will have books to read. Or they do not think what may be the consequences, should our christian population, in all time to come, import their religious books "by bales, and hogsheads full," from foreign countries. The hold which religion takes on men is so powerful, that a foreign nation could scarcely wish for more efficient means to exert an influence over us, than to be permitted to furnish us with all our religious reading. The time has been—may it never return—when such influence was greatly felt in this country; and did much to increase the evils which prevailed by infusing the *odium theologicum*, or *anti-theologicum* into the rancour of party strife.

*Nor can this benefit be expected from our Theological Seminaries, if they are multiplied, to the extent which now seems probable. Because the resources of the church will be entirely inadequate to furnish to so many institutions, the necessary means, and still do every thing else, which must be done, to sustain and extend religion. He was wise who said, *ne quid nimis*.



ERRATA.

Page 4, fifth line from the top, *dele the period*, after the word 'perpetuated.'

Page 30, fourth line, for '*houris*', read *houries*.

Page 50, at the beginning of the paragraph under the head—"*History of Religious Liberty*"—insert No. VIII.

Page 55, first line, for '*what*,' read *that*.

Page 81, thirteenth line from the bottom, for '*christian society*,' read *christian community*.

Page 84, tenth line from the top, for '*there*,' read *then*.

Page 85, twelfth line from the bottom, *dele* "*her*," before the word *European*.