

AN EXPOSITION
OF THE
EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS,
IN A SERIES OF DISCOURSES.
WITH A
PRELIMINARY SERMON
ON THE
EVIDENCES OF THE GOSPEL,
ESPECIALLY THOSE DERIVED FROM THE
CONVERSION, MINISTRY, AND WRITINGS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL.

✓
By JOSEPH LATHROP, D.D.,
FORMERLY PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN WEST SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED
A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR,
BY THE
REV. WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D.

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MEMOIR OF JOSEPH LATHROP, D. D.

JOSEPH LATHROP was a descendant, in the fourth generation, from the Rev. John Lathrop, a minister of Barnstable, in England, who migrated to this country in 1634, and settled in the ministry, in a town which received the same name in Massachusetts. He was a son of Solomon and Martha (Perkins) Lathrop, and was born in Norwich, Conn., October 20, 1731, (O. S.) His parents were both exemplary professors of religion, and were highly respected in the community in which they lived. The death of the father, before the son had reached the age of two years, devolved upon his mother the entire conduct of his early education; and by her he was instructed in the elementary branches, and especially in the principles of religion. In 1739, when he was in his eighth year, his mother was married to a Mr. Loomis, of Bolton, Conn., whom Joseph, when he was fourteen, chose as his guardian. About this time, the great Whitefieldian revival was going forward with mighty power in different parts of the country, and it reached the neighbourhood in which this family lived. Joseph's mind was deeply affected by what he saw and heard, though, to his deep regret, he did not attain to that high measure of joy that was manifested by many around him. It seems, however, not improbable that this may have been the commencement of his Christian life.

When he was about sixteen years of age, he began to entertain a strong desire for a collegiate education, but there was a difficulty in the way, owing to the fact that his patrimony lay chiefly in lands, and no one had the power to dispose of them for the purpose which he contemplated. Through the kindness of his step-father and another near relative, however, this matter was satisfactorily adjusted, so that he was able at once to commence his course of study. He was fitted

for college under the Rev. Thomas White, minister of the Congregational Church in Bolton, who was a very competent teacher. He entered Yale College in 1750, and graduated in 1754, maintaining, through his whole course, a very high standing for talents, scholarship, and deportment. During his last year in college, he was deeply affected by several deaths among his fellow-students, the result of which was that his own personal salvation became with him a matter of renewed interest; but he was now discouraged by the apprehension that he was not one of the elect. In one of his solitary walks, he fell into a train of thought like the following, by means of which his mind was effectually relieved:—"A Saviour has come to open a way of salvation for sinners. Salvation is offered, and the terms are stated. The offer is to all, and the terms are the same for all. In God there is no insincerity. To him belong secret things. Things only which are revealed belong to me. There can be no desire which frustrates the Divine promises. If I comply with the terms, the benefits promised are mine. God has chosen men to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. It concerns me to make my election sure by adding to my faith, virtue, &c. By faith and patience I may inherit the promises." Soon after this, he made a public profession of religion, by becoming a member of the church in Bolton.

Shortly after his graduation at college, he went to Springfield, First Parish, and took charge of a grammar school, at the same time placing himself, as a student of Theology, under the care of the Rev. Robert Breck, in whose family he boarded. Here he was associated with Mr. Josiah Whitney,* then a licensed candidate, with whom he had been for two years a contemporary in college, and with whom he continued in intimate relations to the close of his life. In January, 1756, he was licensed to preach by an Association of ministers convened at Suffield, Conn.

In March following, he was invited to preach as a candidate to the parish in West Springfield, then vacant by the death of the Rev. Samuel Hopkins.† In July, he received a unanimous call to become

* Afterwards the Rev. Dr. Whitney, of Brooklyn, Conn., who died in 1824, at the age of ninety-three.

† Mr. HOPKINS was an uncle to the Rev. Dr. Samuel Hopkins, of Newport, and was the minister of West Springfield from 1720 to 1755.

their pastor, and on the 25th of August, he was ordained and installed, the Rev. Mr. Breck, his theological instructor, preaching on the occasion. Soon after his ordination, he set apart a day for private devotion, with special reference to the solemnity and importance of the work on which he was entering. After making a fresh dedication of himself to God, he formed certain resolutions, designed to cover his whole conduct, of which he left the following record :—

“ With regard to *my devotions*, I resolved,

“ That I would direct my morning thoughts to God, and spend some of my earliest moments in conversing with him—that at evening I would recollect the sins and errors of the day, seeking God’s mercy for pardon, and his grace for future security, and would review occurrences in Providence with suitable reflections upon them—that I would anticipate the seasons of devotion when I foresaw probable diversions—that I would transact ordinary business in the fear of God, set him before me, and act under a sense of his presence—that I would seek a more intimate acquaintance with religion in its doctrines and duties, and make it the rule of my conduct and the source of my comfort.

“ With regard to the *government of myself*, I resolved

To use God’s creatures with sobriety—to exclude vain and sinful thoughts, to suppress rising corruptions, to avoid foreseen temptations, and resist such as might suddenly assail me, to set a watch before me in places of known danger, to guard against rash and unadvised speech, to keep my passions in subjection, and acquire, so far as possible, an habitual command of them.

“ In my *treatment of men*, I resolved

To preserve a sacred regard to truth in my words and to justice in my conduct, to be tender of characters, kind to the needy, meek under supposed injuries, thankful for favours, hospitable to strangers, condescending in cases of difference, courteous and peaceable to all men.

“ In my *ministerial character and work*, I resolved

To cultivate in my heart, and exemplify in my life, that religion which I had undertaken to preach, to compose my sermons with perspicuity and accommodate them to the circumstances of my people—to attend on my ministry even though I might incur worldly loss—to select subjects of real importance and handle them faithfully, though I myself should fall under the censure of my own preaching—to improve providences in my preaching—to commend myself to the consciences

of my hearers, in things indifferent to make not my own will and humour but the common peace and edification the rule of my conduct—to visit, advise and comfort my people as occasion might require ; but not to spend in ceremonious and useless visits the time that ought to be employed in my study—to attend to the calls of rich and poor indifferently, without preferring one before another—to write my sermons with care, and seek divine direction when I entered on the composition of them—to approach God's house with collection of thought, and with a petition for the presence of his grace—to speak that only which might be profitable, and to keep back nothing that was so—to choose out acceptable but upright words—to pay particular attention to the youth in my preaching—to examine what effect my preaching has on myself, and pray that it may have a saving effect on my hearers—to commend my people often to the grace of God, and to remember at his throne their various particular cases—in all my religious inquiries to make the sacred oracles my guide, and never to receive for doctrine the commandments of men.

“Having formed and written these resolutions, I laid them before God, and concluded with this prayer :—My gracious God, these resolutions I have formed in thy presence, and I hope in thy fear. My performance will depend on thy grace. This I now humbly implore. Let it be present with me, and be sufficient for me. I plead no worthiness of my own, for none have I to plead ; but other and better arguments abound. They are such as thou hast put into my mouth and into my heart. Let these prevail. I plead thine abundant mercy ; the righteousness and intercession of thy Son ; the power and goodness of thy Spirit ; the free offers of thy help made in thy word ; thy command that I should seek thy Spirit, and the promise annexed to the command. May I not also plead my relation to thy people. Thou hast put me into the ministry. Let not my sins and my unworthiness hinder my receiving such a supply of thy grace as may be necessary to the success of my ministry. Let not my iniquities stand in the way of the salvation of any one of my fellow sinners. However, it may ultimately fare with me, my heart's desire and prayer for my people is that they may be saved.”

On the 16th of May, 1759, he was married to Elizabeth, daughter of Seth Dwight, of Hatfield, Mass. In this connexion was laid the foundation for much domestic happiness. They had six children, all

of them sons. One died in infancy—all the rest lived to mature years, and three of them to an advanced age. One of them, *Seth*, passed his whole active life as a physician in his native place, and another, *Samuel*, was graduated at Yale College in 1791, entered the profession of Law, was for many years a member of Congress, and held several honourable positions in his own State. Mrs. Lathrop survived her husband about four months and a half, and died on the 13th of May, 1821, in consequence of the fracture of a bone occasioned by a fall upon the ice.

In 1772, a controversy arose in his parish on the subject of Baptism, which occasioned considerable agitation, though it seems to have been conducted, on all sides, without marked asperity. In the progress of this controversy, he preached several sermons on the subject, which were published shortly after, and have since been widely circulated in many editions, on both sides of the Atlantic. These sermons contain one of the most luminous, candid and satisfactory expositions and defences of the doctrine of the Pædo Baptists, which the English language furnishes.

At the commencement of the Revolutionary war, in 1775, he, in common with many of his brethren, was not a little embarrassed by the emission of the paper currency; and, as his salary was reduced to a mere pittance, he was obliged to devote a small part of his time to the labours of the field. In addition to this, an epidemic disease, prevailing in his parish for three successive summers, imposed upon him a greatly increased measure of pastoral duty. Under this pressure his own health began at length to decline. Early in 1778, the small-pox appeared in the neighbourhood, and as neither himself nor his family had ever had the disease, they were all inoculated for it, and went into a hospital. Owing to the great demand for his pastoral services, he resumed his labours before his strength had returned sufficiently to warrant it; and after two or three months, so feeble had he become that he was obliged to desist from his work altogether. After journeying, and using other means to invigorate his health, he ventured to return to his pulpit in December following; but, after about four months, the revival of his malady obliged him to quit it again, which he did with the full conviction that his ministry had now come to a close. However, after about eighteen months, he was able, in a sitting posture, to address his people for about fifteen minutes; and from that

time his health continued to improve until he was able to perform one short service in a day.

During this period of the suspension of his labours, his congregation manifested great sympathy for him, were satisfied with the little service that he could render, and waited patiently for his full recovery. But in the midst of this harmonious state of feeling, a circumstance occurred which produced very serious disquietude, and threatened, at one time, to rend the parish asunder. In October, 1780, a man calling himself *John Watkins*, came into his parish, and began to preach in its extremities without his knowledge. He professed to have had the charge of a large congregation in England; to have subjected himself to great sacrifices from having been a vigorous defender of the American cause; and to have fled from his country for the sake of escaping political persecution. He made great pretensions to piety, called himself a disciple of Whitefield, and expressed the deepest interest in the spiritual welfare of the congregation, especially in view of their being then deprived of the regular services of a Pastor. He brought no credentials with him from England, but he accounted for the omission from the alleged fact that he was obliged to make his escape in extreme haste, and had no time to get ready for the voyage. But his high pretensions to piety and patriotism were accepted in place of his credentials, and he was invited to supply Mr. Lathrop's pulpit a single Sabbath. As they were dependent upon such supplies as they could secure, the parish now engaged him to preach for a number of Sabbaths; this he did to the satisfaction of a portion of the people, while the more discerning part set him down at once as a fanatic or an impostor. Meanwhile he appointed many week-day meetings in different parts of the parish, rarely consulted the Pastor in respect to any of his movements, and laboured, and not without some success, to disaffect the minds of his people towards him. After he had preached seven Sabbaths, including a Thanksgiving Day, his services had become so manifestly distasteful to the mass of the congregation that he abruptly left the pulpit, and set up a private meeting, on which a small number attended for a short time. With this meeting terminated his inglorious career at West Springfield. But the effect of his false and fanatical teaching survived the period of his sojourn there. He had reviled the regular ministry; had maintained that saints know infallibly each other's hearts, and all whom they cannot fellowship are unre-

generate; that the church ought to admit none to communion but those whom she certainly *knows* to be regenerate; and that the Scriptures, besides a literal, have also a mystical or spiritual sense, which none but saints understand, and which is communicated to them immediately by the Spirit of God. A few of the members, who had imbibed these notions, withdrew from the church; but, being treated with great kindness, nearly all of them returned at no distant period, and harmony was restored. Mr. Lathrop's health had meanwhile so far improved that he was able to resume his accustomed labours. About this time he preached two sermons on the works of false teachers, entitled, "Wolves in Sheep's Clothing," which were suggested by his bitter experience in connection with Watkins; and these sermons were printed, and have passed through some twelve editions. One edition was published in Edinburgh, through the instrumentality of Dr. Erskine, and the work was highly commended in some of the British periodicals.

In 1791, he was honoured with the degree of Doctor of Divinity from the college at which he had graduated. In recording this fact, he adds:—"This I valued as a token of respect from my literary friends; but it added nothing to the merit of the recipient." In 1811, the same degree was conferred upon him by Harvard University. In 1792, he was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In 1793, he was elected Professor of Divinity in Yale College; but though there were many considerations that might reasonably enough have influenced him in favour of an acceptance of the appointment, he nevertheless decided against sundering the tie that bound him to his people.

Dr. Lathrop pursued the even tenor of his way, supplying regularly his own pulpit, discharging his pastoral duties with great fidelity, and often going abroad to assist at ordinations, and in the settlement of ecclesiastical difficulties, until the last Sabbath in March, 1818, the day which completed the sixty-second year from the commencement of his labours as a candidate. In consequence of the increasing infirmities of age, and especially of the great imperfection of his sight, he now made known his purpose to withdraw from the active duties of the ministry, and requested the congregation to make other provision for the supply of the pulpit. On this occasion, he delivered a sort of Valedictory Discourse, expressive of his affectionate regard, and full

of seasonable counsels and cautions. Though he was unable, from this time, to read even the productions of his own pen, he continued, for several months, to write about one sermon a week; which was read from the pulpit by his son; and he used to say that he thought his congregation were rather gainers by his blindness, as his son had a much better delivery than ever he had. Though he had never cultivated the habit of extemporaneous speaking, even at his occasional lectures in the outskirts of his parish, the loss of his vision now led him to try his powers sometimes in this way, and the result was always most satisfactory to his hearers.

On the 25th of August, 1819, the sixty-third anniversary of his own ordination, he attended the ordination of his colleague. The Council, in making the appointments for the day, had urgently requested him to take part in the service; but on account of the great uncertainty of his health, he persistently declined. The next morning, however—and a bright and beautiful morning it was—as he was on his way to the church to attend the ordination services, it was suggested to him that it would greatly gratify the audience if he would offer one of the prayers, and as he seemed rather unusually vigorous, perhaps he might be willing to make the effort. He readily consented to the proposal; and the result of a brief consultation among some of the members of the Council, after they were seated in the pulpit, was that the introductory prayer, or prayer before the sermon, was assigned to him. That prayer he offered, and the universal verdict of the hearers was that it was one of the most comprehensive, appropriate, and impressive devotional exercises to which they had ever listened.

A few days after he had performed this service, he was attacked by an alarming form of disease, (a comatose affection,) to which he had before been occasionally subject, and from which there seemed now to be little hope of his recovery. But after remaining insensible for about two days, he was suddenly restored to consciousness, and greeted his anxious friends who were watching at his bedside, as if he had actually come back from a visit to the invisible world. He began immediately to gather strength, and after a few days, was in the enjoyment of his accustomed health. He seemed to regard his recovery almost in the light of a miracle.

From this time there was a perceptible waning of his great intellect, and his memory especially would often be at fault, so that his sentences

would sometimes be left unfinished, and the fine thought which he had in his mind would be lost in the utterance. He, however, continued to attend public worship, and occasionally took part in the devotional service until about two months before his death. His last public exercise was a prayer at a funeral in a case of uncommon affliction ; and he could not have uttered himself more appropriately, or fluently, or fervently, at any period of his life.

On the Sabbath next succeeding the 25th of August, 1820, (the sixty-fourth anniversary of his ordination,) he attended public worship, and heard a discourse on the responsibilities of a Christian minister. The train of thought affected him deeply, and led him, as he afterwards remarked, to a fresh review of his own ministry. To a friend, with whom he returned from church, he made substantially the following remarks :—" I have been a steward for a long time, and shall have a large account to render. I often think of it. When I look back upon my ministry, I find great cause for humility. I have been an unprofitable servant, and my only hope is in the glorious Redeemer. If I do not come short at last, it will be not on account of any worthiness in me, but on account of the all-sufficiency of Christ. I think I can say with another, that, if I ever arrive at that blessed world, I shall have had so much forgiven me, that I will sing the praises of redeeming love in as loud strains as any saint or angel there."

The last day of October, which was his eighty-ninth birth-day, he observed as a day of solemn recollection and self-examination. He remarked to a friend in the course of the day, that he had been reviewing his life, and he found it had been crowded with blessings. He then said, with a profusion of tears, that it overwhelmed him. " I have endeavoured," he added, " to exercise some degree of gratitude, particularly for the blessings of the past year, but I have not yet asked God to add to my life another year, and have not determined that it is my duty to make such a request."

In the early part of December, it became apparent both to himself and his friends, that the time of his departure was at hand ; but he spake of it with solemnity indeed, but without the semblance of agitation or apparent anxiety. He would not say that he had the full assurance of faith, but he often remarked that his confidence in the Saviour was so strong that he was not afraid to die. A few days before his death, one of his friends remarked to him that it must be a

comfort to him to reflect that he had lived so useful a life. "Oh no," said he, "I find little consolation from anything which *I* have done. I believe I have endeavoured to be diligent in my profession, but every step of my course has been marked by imperfections. I have consolation, I trust, in the prospect of death, but it is all derived from the hope which I have built on the atonement of my Redeemer." There was a simplicity, a naturalness in all his expressions, that showed the operation of a well-established principle of Divine grace. To the last, his demonstrations were characterized by the dignity and courtesy of the gentleman, and the generous sensibilities of the friend, not less than the graces of the true Christian. On the day preceding his death, a neighbouring minister, who had called to take his final leave of him, expressed the hope that he had the needed consolation in the prospect of death; to which he replied, with emphasis, "Yes, I have." Shortly after this, he became apparently insensible, and subsequently gave no sign of consciousness, unless it were by fixing himself in an attitude of devotion for a few moments while a prayer was offered at his bedside. He died on Sabbath morning, the 31st of December, 1820, having lived eighty-nine years and two months. His funeral was attended by a large concourse, and with every demonstration of the most profound respect, on Wednesday, the 3d of January, 1821.

Dr. Lathrop had the privilege of witnessing several interesting revivals of religion under his ministry, the most extensive of which was in the years 1815 and '16. Though he was now burdened by the infirmities of age, the deep interest he took in the passing scene seemed to give him new life, and he laboured, in season and out of season, with a zeal and energy worthy of a young man.

Dr. Lathrop had a high reputation as a theological teacher. He fitted about twenty young men for the ministry at different periods, among whom was Jesse Appleton, who afterwards became President of Bowdoin College, and one of the brightest lights of the New England Pulpit.

As an author of Sermons, Dr. Lathrop is one of the most voluminous and respectable which the country can boast. Six volumes were published during his life, though the last is made up of occasional sermons, nearly all of which had been printed before in pamphlet form. Shortly after his death, a seventh volume was published, with a brief memoir of his life, written chiefly by himself. The first volume in

the series was published originally in 1793; and the rest followed successively, at brief intervals. Several of the volumes have passed to a second edition. In 1786, a small volume was published, entitled "A Miscellaneous Collection of Original Pieces; Political, Moral and Entertaining." This was made up of articles which he had contributed to a newspaper in Springfield. The following is a list of his occasional Sermons, &c., not included in the sixth volume:—A Letter to the Rev. Associated Pastors in the County of New Haven, concerning the Ordination of the Rev. John Hubbard, in Meriden, 1770. A Sermon at the Funeral of the Rev. Robert Breck, 1784. A Thanksgiving Sermon, 1786. A Sermon on occasion of the Dismission of the Rev. Joseph Willard from the church in North Wilbraham, 1794. A Sermon on American Independence, 1794. A Thanksgiving Sermon, 1795. A Sermon at the Interment of the Rev. Ebenezer Gay, D. D., of Suffield, 1796. A Sermon at the Interment of Mrs. Mary Gay, 1796. A Sermon at the Ordination of Heman Ball, at Rutland, Vt., 1797. A Sermon at the Dedication of Westfield Academy, 1800. A Century Sermon, 1801. A Sermon at the Ordination of Stephen Bemis, at Harvard, 1801. A Sermon at the Interment of the Rev. Noah Atwater, of Westfield, 1802. A Sermon before the Hampshire Missionary Society, 1802. Two Sermons on the Christian Sabbath, 1803. A Fast Sermon, on the Constancy and Uniformity of the Divine Government, 1803. A Sermon at the Ordination of Sylvester Burt, at Western, Mass., 1806. A Sermon at the Ordination of Elisha Andrews, at Putney, Vt., 1807. A Sermon at the Ordination of Thaddeus Osgood, as an Evangelist, 1808. An Address of the Associated Ministers of the Southern District of the County of Hampshire, 1810. A Sermon at the Ordination of Jesse Fisher, in Windham, (Scotland parish,) Conn., 1811. A Sermon at the Institution of a Foreign Mission Society, 1812. A Sermon delivered at the Second Church in Boston, 1812. A Sermon before the Bible and Foreign Missionary Society of the County of Hampden, 1814. Two Sermons on the Sixtieth Anniversary of his Ordination, 1816.

The following extracts from Dr. Lathrop's Autobiography, may help to illustrate certain points of his character:—

"My steady aim in preaching has been to promote real religion, in temper and practice, and to state and apply the doctrines of the Gospel in a manner best adapted to this end. Keeping this end in view, I have

avoided unprofitable controversy. I have never started objections against a plain doctrine to show my agility in running them down. I have been careful not to awaken disputes, which were quietly asleep, nor to waste my own nor my hearers' time, by reproofing imaginary faults or indifferent customs. Among these I have reckoned the *fashions of dress*. I was once, and once only, requested to preach against prevailing fashions. A remote inhabitant of the parish, apparently in a serious frame, called upon me one day, and pressed the necessity of bearing my testimony against this dangerous evil. I observed to him that, as my people were generally farmers in middling circumstances, I did not think they took a lead in fashions—if they followed them, it was at a humble distance, and rather to avoid singularity than to encourage extravagance; that, as long as people were in the habit of wearing clothes, they must have some fashion or other, and a fashion that answered the ends of dress, and exceeded not the ability of the wearer, I considered as innocent and not deserving reproof. To this he agreed; but said what grieved him was to see *people set their hearts* so much on fashions. I conceded that, as modes of dress were trifles, compared with our eternal concerns, to set our hearts upon them must be a great sin. But I advised him to consider that to set our hearts *against* such trifles was the same sin as to set our hearts *upon* them; and as his fashion differed from those of his neighbours, just in proportion as he set his heart *against theirs*, he set his heart *upon his own*. He was therefore doubly guilty of the very sin which he imputed to others. And I desired him to correct his own fault, which he could not but know, and to hope that his neighbours were less faulty than himself, and less faulty than he had uncharitably supposed them to be."

"1781, Autumn. Travelling for my health, I called at a tavern for refreshment. The landlord soon introduced to me a gentleman who, he told me, was a *Universalist*. I supposed his aim was to bring forward a dispute on the subject of future punishment. After customary civilities, I told the gentleman my health was not good; I conversed but little, and wholly declined disputes; I should, however, be gratified if he would give me his opinion on the controverted question. He was very courteous, and readily answered me in this manner: 'I will state my opinion by reference to the story of the deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt. The people came to the Red Sea, saw the Egyptians on their rear, found themselves entangled between moun-

tains, and fell into murmuring and despair. Moses told them there was no danger—the sea would open a way for their escape. They did not believe it, but Moses believed it. The sea opened, and they arrived to the other shore. (He should have remembered that the Egyptians, pursuing them, were all drowned.) The people were now as safe as Moses. But Moses, by his faith, had the comfort of the deliverance beforehand. To apply this to the question before us—believers and unbelievers will be equally safe and happy in the other world. All the difference is that believers have the comfort of salvation in this world, which unbelievers have not.’

“I answered him, ‘Sir, I understand your system. I will trouble you only to give me an explanation of one passage of Scripture—‘These shall go away into everlasting punishment.’

“‘The explanation,’ said he, ‘is very easy.’ Christ says, ‘I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; thirsty, and ye gave me no drink,’ &c. These, that is, these sins, these unkind dispositions, shall go away into everlasting destruction; shall cease and be no more known.’

“‘Very well,’ I replied, ‘now, as an honest interpreter of Scripture, you will adhere to your own rule. The Judge says to them on his right hand, ‘I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink,’ &c. The righteous, that is, according to your interpretation, these righteous dispositions, these kind, hospitable virtues shall go into life eternal. You have disposed of the *vices* of the wicked, and the virtues of the righteous. Now be so good as to tell me what becomes of the persons themselves.’ He gave no direct answer, but diverted to observations foreign to the question.”

“February, 1803. Riding alone in my cutter, I passed a man on foot who belonged to my parish. He was nearly fifty years old—not a man of the most blameless character. I invited him to ride with me. A particular incident introduced religious conversation, to which he seemed not averse. I had before conversed with him. He would always receive advice and reproof without offence, and never would deny the faults of which he was openly guilty. Our conversation was as follows:—‘Mr. —, why do you not attend public worship?’ ‘Because I think it will do no good. I mean to be an honest man—to injure no man.’ ‘So far is well—no man can be a real Christian without honesty. But this alone will not make a Christian. There must be a holy heart—a heart to love God; to believe in Christ, the

only Saviour of lost sinners. There must be a conviction of sin, a godly sorrow for it, a hatred of it, a resolution and watchfulness against it in all its forms, and especially against the sins that most easily beset you; there must be a respect for all God's commandments, and a humble reliance on the grace and mercy of God through a divine Redeemer.' 'I know all this, and I know I am a sinner; and I would give all I have in the world that I was a good man. I desire this above all things.' 'Why, then, are you not a good man?' 'I wish I was, but I can't be. I can't change my own heart. If it is ever changed, it must be done by the power of God's Spirit.' 'It is true that for a change of heart you are dependent on the grace of God. But there are some things which you *can* do, and which you *will* do, if you really desire to be a good man. You can go to God's house on his appointed day. That is the place where, and the time when, you are to hope for God's Spirit. He begets men by the word of truth. Therefore be swift to hear. There were many in the Apostles' days who received the Spirit in the hearing of the word of faith. You can withdraw your foot from the place of temptation—you can lay apart the superfluity of naughtiness, and the gross forms of wickedness, which oppose the Spirit.' 'Yes, I can do all this, but it will do no good. My withdrawing from the tavern and going to the place of worship will make no difference in my case. If God is pleased to send his Holy Spirit into my heart, and to renew it by his immediate power, I shall then be renewed. If not, I must remain as I am, and take my destiny. Nothing that I can do will make my case better or worse, more or less hopeful. I hope God will do something for me. When *he* does it, then it will be done.' 'But, my friend, you certainly deceive yourself. You say you would give all you have in the world that you was a good man. But you won't give your bottle. They who are sensual have not the Spirit. But if you will not renounce sensuality, how will you have the Spirit. If ever you become a good man, you will become a temperate man. If you desire to be a good man, be a temperate man now. This you can be. If you would give all you have that you were a good man, you will give so much labour as to go to God's house and seek him there. If ever you become a good man, you will do this—why will you not do it now? It is manifest you do not wish to be a good man. You will not relinquish so small a thing as your bottle, nor take so small a walk as from

your house to the meeting-house, though you know that so long as you retain the former and neglect the latter, you cannot be the man whom you say you wish to be. You are like those of whom God complains that they will not frame their *doings* to turn to him. And how will he pardon you for this?" By this time, we came to the place where it was convenient for him to leave me, and the conversation ended. I do not know that it had any effect. He seemed to be sensible that he was a sinner, and to think that it was no fault of his if he continued such; because he was dependent on the grace of God, and his eternal destiny was fixed by God's sovereignty, and fixed unconditionally. In his last sickness, which was not many years after, he was, to appearance, in a serious and thoughtful state of mind—was desirous of prayers from others. And he said he employed himself in prayer all his time. He condemned his past manner of life, and seemed to have some reliance on Divine mercy."

"A poor man, not of the best character, came to my house one morning in great agitation, and said to me:—'You requested me to work for you to-day; and I told you I would; but there has something happened in my house, which distresses me to such a degree that I have no heart to work. My wife, as she was tying her child's shoe, perceived a drop of fresh blood on her own finger; and we can find no cause from which it proceeded. We think it must be supernatural. My wife thinks it is a sign that one of the family will soon die; and she singles me out as the victim.' It seems she was willing rather to part with her husband than go herself. Had the blood fallen on *his* finger, I imagine *she* would not so readily have appropriated the warning as she now applied it to *him*. The man asked me what I thought of the matter. I answered him to this purpose:—'Whether the blood be from a natural or supernatural cause we need not inquire. Be it which it may, it is no proof that you will die. Of this you need no proof. You know you must die, and may die soon. If you have not thought of, and prepared for, such a certain and solemn event, it is high time you had. If this blood, falling in such a manner on your wife's finger, should prove the occasion of awakening you to repentance of sin, and newness of life, it will do you no harm, but infinite benefit. Make this improvement of it, and all will be well. You have nothing to fear from the blood—your only danger is from yourself.' The terror in a few days subsided; no calamitous event followed; the man still ap-

peared the same as he had been before. Sudden frights seldom produce lasting reformations."

The following sketch of Dr. Lathrop's character is extracted from the sermon, preached by his colleague, on the occasion of his funeral :

"The character of Doctor Lathrop, as a MAN, was made up of a rare assemblage of interesting qualities. Perhaps it is not too much to say that he possessed an *intellect* of the first order. If the cast of his mind was less bold than that of some other great men, there are few whose intellectual operations are equally rapid, distinct and original. His discernment of character seemed almost intuitive. In the investigation of truth, his mind was accustomed to range through the whole field of evidence, and finally arrive at its conclusion by a path so luminous, that few could trace it without perfect conviction. Multitudes can testify, with what delight they have listened to his conversation, when his mind has seemed to dart like lightning through a difficult subject, and by a single effort, to relieve it from all its obscurity.

"One of the features, by which his intellectual character was strongly marked, was an *uncommon power of invention*. Some of his ideas, on almost every subject, were peculiarly his own; and even those which were comparatively trite, could not pass through his mind, without receiving a tinge of originality. His imagination, though originally prolific, was disciplined with the strictest care, and oftener delighted by its gentle and delicate touches, than overpowered by its awful sublimity and magnificence. It was his to wander in the calm sunshine of heaven, and amidst the softer and more beautiful scenes of creation, rather than to move in the whirlwind, or mount in the storm. A vein of brilliant but chastened humour frequently appeared in his conversation, which, while it always gave a charm to his intercourse with his friends, never left an impression unfavourable to the strict delicacy of his feelings, or the dignity of his character.

"The *qualities of his heart*, also, all who knew him will acknowledge, were peculiarly excellent. Benevolence marked his whole deportment. The more private and endearing relations of life he sustained with the utmost dignity and affection; and never seemed more in the sphere for which Providence designed him, than when mingling in the social enjoyments of his own fireside. In his common intercourse, he was unusually affable and communicative, and accommodated himself, with peculiar felicity, to the characters of those with whom he conversed.

To all his other amiable and social qualities were added an unusual serenity, and cheerfulness of temper, which gave to his old age a charm, as rare as it was delightful.

“ His *manners* were the simple effusion of his amiable and excellent feelings. Without any of that severity or ostentation which are so often mistaken for the concomitants of greatness, he was uniformly mild and unobtrusive. Though it was impossible to be long in his presence without an impression of his superiority, that impression was never assisted by anything like personal display. His politeness was of the highest kind. It was nature speaking in all her simplicity and loveliness through his whole deportment.

“ As a CHRISTIAN, Doctor Lathrop was also in no small degree distinguished. If we were to attempt to describe his religious character in a single word, we should say that it was eminently *consistent*. He was equally remote from the intemperate heat of enthusiasm on the one hand, and that miserable, lifeless system which excludes all exercise of the affections on the other. It was his favourite maxim, that the evidence of a Christian temper is not so much to be sought in occasional fervours, as in a consistent, pious, and exemplary deportment. Those who knew him best are most ready to testify in what rich abundance he brought forth the fruits of the Spirit; how frequent, fervent, and affectionate was his communion with his God; how exemplary were his patience and fortitude under the pressure of deep affliction, and the accumulated infirmities of age; how inoffensive, and forbearing, and charitable he was in all his intercourse with the world; how much disposed to mourn over the deficiencies and sins of his life, and give to God all the glory of his salvation; how benign, joyful, and even rapturous was the spirit with which he sometimes spake of his approaching departure, and his entrance upon that rest which remains for the people of God. The glorious plan of redemption was the theme which occupied his mind above every other; and while absorbed in meditation on this wonderful subject, he seemed almost to rise above these regions of mortality, and anticipate the transports of the redeemed. It was his usual practice to devote the first and last moments of every day to solemn self-examination, meditation, and prayer. In this exercise, he has been heard to say, that he found great satisfaction and profit; and there is no doubt that it contributed much to the stability and elevation of his Christian character.

“ But the most interesting view of Doctor Lathrop’s character remains yet to be exhibited ; It was as a MINISTER of Jesus that his reputation shone with the most unclouded splendour. To his comprehensive intellect and exalted piety was added all that acquired ministerial furniture, which is necessary to constitute a great *theologian*. From the straitened advantages of his early theological education, as well as from the constant pressure of parochial duties in after life, it was not to be expected that his reading should be so extensive or various, as that of many others, who are placed in more propitious circumstances. He was, however, familiar with the most distinguished theological writers, and could analyze, at pleasure, many important controversies in the Christian Church. The science of theology he had carefully studied in all its parts and connections. The system of truth which he found in the BIBLE, and to which he steadfastly adhered, was that of which salvation, by the atoning blood and life-giving Spirit of Christ, is the prominent feature. Here he often declared, he rested his hope of heaven ; and that if the great doctrine of atonement were taken away, there was, in his view, nothing left in the gospel, to meet the necessities of a sinner. At the same time, his enlarged views of Christianity led him to place a due estimate upon every part of evangelical truth. The system of doctrines and precepts, revealed in the gospel, was, to his apprehension, a harmonious and beautiful whole ; every part of which, though not absolutely essential to salvation, bears the impress of truth and Divinity.

“ AS a PREACHER, Doctor Lathrop undoubtedly held no ordinary rank. He never conducted his hearers into the field of metaphysical and refined speculation, but was contented to preach the truth as it is in Jesus. His discourses were remarkable for a practical exhibition of gospel truth ; for a strict and ingenious analysis of his subject ; for abounding with lively, impressive sentiment, and deep and critical views of human nature, and for a simplicity and perspicuity of method, sentiment and expression, which rendered them alike intelligible to the most illiterate, and gratifying to the most refined of his hearers. It is a common observation among preachers, that the great truths of the gospel, from the peculiar constitution of the human mind, lose much of their effect, by being often repeated ; but Doctor Lathrop possessed the rare talent of making the text of every discourse so prominent, that while he kept constantly in view the same cardinal truths,

his hearers were perpetually gratified with novelty. Though he preached all the doctrines of the gospel affectionately and faithfully, he never introduced controversy into the pulpit, unless some exigency manifestly required it. As a writer of occasional sermons, it may be doubted whether he was exceeded by any preacher of his day. His peculiarly fertile and inventive genius supplied him with materials appropriate to every occasion. He composed with great rapidity, and, it would seem, with less intellectual effort than most writers of eminence. He has left behind him about five thousand manuscript sermons, a noble monument of his piety, talents, and industry.

“In his *devotional exercises*, he was peculiarly fervent, appropriate and instructive. His occasional prayers were so remarkably pertinent, that no circumstance, which could excite sympathy or interest, seemed to be overlooked. While the pious mind attended upon these exercises with delight and edification, it was impossible to resist the impression, that his heart was warmed with the true spirit of a disciple. Those of us, my hearers, who have so often been privileged to accompany him to the throne of grace, will never forget the affectionate fervour which seemed to glow in every petition, the exalted strain of evangelical sentiment, the expressions of deep humility and unfeigned confidence in the merits of the Redeemer, and the tender and animating benedictions which he pronounced upon his beloved people. The interests of his congregation were peculiarly near his heart, and his prayers were never more fervent, than while he was commending them, in all the tenderness of a father, to the blessings of his Father in heaven.

“His *manner in the pulpit*, as I am informed, was natural, solemn, and impressive. Without possessing, in a high degree, the graces of elocution, there was a dignified and reverent style of address which gave importance to every sentiment that he uttered. It was the unaffected expression of a heart impressed and elevated by a sense of the presence and majesty of Jehovah.

“In his *pastoral intercourse*, he was uncommonly attentive to the peculiar circumstances of his flock, and disposed to make great personal sacrifices, for the sake of preserving their union and prosperity. Above all, he was an eminent example of prudence. He was cautious, without being timid; familiar, without sacrificing his dignity; condescending, without abandoning what he believed to be the principles of

duty. In cases of difficulty, his people always found in him a counsellor, in whose decisions they could trust with unwavering confidence. In seasons of affliction, they found him alive to all their sorrows and ready to commend them to the God of all grace and comfort. They only, who have known and loved him as their minister, can form an adequate idea of the tenderness and dignity, with which he sustained the pastoral relation.

“As a ruler in the church, few men have been more eminently distinguished. His excellent judgment and consummate prudence, united with a deep discernment of character, and an extensive acquaintance with ecclesiastical government, eminently qualified him to be entrusted with the most important interests of the church. The numerous instances, in which his advice has been solicited in doubtful and perplexing cases, show in what estimation his character as a counsellor has been held by the Christian public. His talent at composing differences was almost peculiar to himself. He has more than once, when called to act as mediator, in the heat of controversy, extinguished the flame of animosity and discord, and dropped upon the conflicting parties the mantle of kindness and benignity.

“It would be a grateful employment, did time permit, to dwell upon many other features of Doctor Lathrop’s character, but we must leave to your own recollection, to fill up the imperfect outline which has been presented. We do not pretend that he was free from the infirmities of human nature, or hold him up to you as a model of Christian perfection; but for intellectual greatness, for the most amiable and kind affections, for exemplary prudence and enlightened, consistent piety, we believe that few men have sustained a more exalted character. Multitudes who have only heard of the splendour of his virtues, will contemplate, in his death, the extinction of one of the brightest luminaries of the church; while those who have been blessed with his instructions and example, who have revered him as a pastor and loved him as a father, will delight to embalm his memory in the most grateful and tender recollections.”