

THE AMERICAN  
NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 7.

NEW-YORK, DECEMBER, 1832.

VOL. 7.

SERMON CXXXIV.

BY WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D.

ALBANY, N. Y.

THE GOD OF THE CHRISTIAN AND THE GOD OF THE INFIDEL.

PSALM lxxxvi. 8.—*Among the gods, there is none like unto thee, O Lord.*

THE existence of a God is a fundamental principle of all religion. The mind, whenever this doctrine is presented to it, instantly perceives that it is grasping an idea of immense importance; and that, before it has paused to survey its momentous and infinitely extended bearings. But when considered in its relations to the material and the immaterial world, to every object in the wide range of thought, it gathers an interest which the mind, in its loftiest aspirings, is inadequate to comprehend; being a sort of dividing line between the territories of light and the territories of darkness; between a region illumined by the acknowledgment of the active presence of a God, and a region over which hang the clouds, and shadows, and curses of Atheism.

But it must be acknowledged that, while the existence of a God lies at the foundation of all religion, this momentous truth derives much of its importance from the character which is attributed to him. Laying out of view the gods of the heathen, to which our text may be supposed to have had especial reference, we all know that the Supreme Being has been invested with a variety of character by those who have professed their belief in the spirituality of his nature. I purpose in this discourse to bring before you *the God of the infidel, and the God of the Christian*; and to inquire *which is most likely to exalt the character of man; which best adapted to meet his necessities.*

I. *Let us compare the God of the infidel and the God of the Christian.*

1. The infidel's God is a being of *uncertain attributes*: the character of the Christian's God is *fixed and certain.*

If you cast an eye through the records of deism, you can hardly fail to be struck with the fact that there are scarcely two individuals who acknowledge the same God. Some of them have conceived of the divine Being in a manner imperfect indeed, but in some degree just; have uttered sublime senti-

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ments both in respect to his attributes and his works, and have even seemed to feel some lofty aspirations in contemplating his character. There are others whose conceptions on this subject are more inadequate and gross, and who, while they profess to acknowledge the spirituality of God, invest him with properties or attribute to him actions which are scarcely consistent with it. And there are others still, who, though they will admit in the general the divine existence, yet seem scarcely to recognise the difference between nature and nature's God; leaving it doubtful on which side they stand of the line that divides deism from atheism. And not only is there a sad disagreement on this subject between different individuals, but the views of the same individual are often, in a high degree, inconsistent and contradictory. I say then that the infidel's God is a being to whom no fixed character belongs. Some things indeed on this subject all infidels hold in common; but there are so many particulars in which they disagree, and withal so much self-contradiction, that if we should attempt to describe minutely the object of the infidel's professed homage, we should seem to describe not one God but "gods many."

Not so with the being whom the Christian worships. Whether we look at each of the various attributes of which his character is composed, or at the whole in glorious combination, we see the indubitable impress of certainty. There is much indeed in this character, which the human mind is, and for ever will be, too limited to grasp; nevertheless, so far as its knowledge extends, it is accurate and certain. Hence we find that in every clime, in every age, the God whom Christians adore is the same;—"the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Nor is this difference between the God of the infidel and the God of the Christian difficult to be accounted for. For the infidel depends for his knowledge solely upon the deductions of his own reason; a guide which is often bewildered or bribed through the influence of passion; and which in its best state sheds but an imperfect light on the character of the Highest. The Christian, on the other hand, has the object of his supreme homage faithfully described;—described by the very hand of Almighty God: and the description is so plain that an honest mind can never mistake it. Is it strange that the infidel's God should have no fixed character, when it is left to human reason to decide what his character is? Or is it strange that the Christian's God should be everywhere and at all times the same, when it is remembered that *his* character is matter of infallible record?

2. The God of the infidel is *little more than a mere distant spectator of events*: the God of the Christian is *everywhere, in the exercise of a sustaining, controlling and a gracious energy*.

The being whom the infidel calls God, if we can believe the infidel's own representations, reposes in a kind of indolent majesty, exercising but little regard towards the works of his hands. He is indeed supposed to have established some general laws for the government of his creation; but these laws are commonly spoken of in a manner which scarcely seems to imply a law-giver, and as if they were left to execute themselves. It may be admitted that he takes some cognizance, and exercises some interest in respect to the grander events which occur both in the physical and moral world; that he keeps the planets in their orbits, and guides the revolutions of empires: but with the lesser and every-day concerns of life it is supposed that he has little

to do. His providence, instead of implying a divine energy diffused everywhere, and operating in every thing, is, at best, a sort of indefinite superintendence of his works, which may leave even man himself to become the sport of accident. And the reason of this is, that the infidel in this respect forms his idea of God from looking into his own bosom: he finds there a spirit of abominable arrogance, which disdains every thing in which he cannot fancy something of greatness or majesty; and he attributes the same character to the object of his professed homage.

The Christian's God, on the other hand, not only fills all space, but fills it with an active and controlling energy. Like the God of the infidel, he has established general laws for the regulation of his empire; but this does not supersede his unremitting vigilance, and care, and activity. He is present in all worlds to control the events of each; and while the whole system of things moves on exactly in accordance with the dictates of his will and of his wisdom, his regards are as intensely fixed upon the destiny of the obscurest individual, or even upon the unfolding of a flower or the motion of an atom, as if it were the only object to engross his infinite mind. True it is his energy that wheels around the planets; that thunders in the storm; that empties the volcano; that blazes in the lightning; that breathes in the wind; but it is alike his energy that sustains the beating pulse of the humblest child of want, that keeps *you* in existence from hour to hour and moment to moment; that operates in every thing that presents itself to you either as an object of sense or of thought. As nothing is too grand, so nothing is too insignificant for his eye and his providence to reach. The worm that creeps upon his footstool, and the angel that burns before his throne, are alike within the range of his vision, within the control of his arm, with in the circle of his regard. He is arrayed not only in the majesty of infinite wisdom and infinite power, but also in the majesty of infinite condescension.

3. The God of the infidel we can contemplate only *in his abstract perfections*: the attributes of the Christian's God are embodied in the person of *Jesus Christ*.

There are two ways in which the infidel may form his conclusions in respect to the character of God. He may carefully inspect the elements of his own intellectual and moral nature, and may find in them some faint resemblance to some of the divine perfections. For instance, his idea of power or of knowledge is originally obtained by reflecting upon the operations of his own mind; and by indefinitely magnifying these qualities as they exist in himself, he attains to a conception of the omniscience and the omnipotence of God. Or else he looks abroad upon the divine works, and surveys their harmony, their grandeur, their adaptation to their various ends, and hence forms his opinion of the character of him who built and who preserves this stupendous fabric. Now I admit that all this is fair and legitimate argumentation; and I do not deny that in either of these ways it is possible to arrive at just conclusions in respect to some of the divine perfections. But I maintain that the attributes of God, viewed merely in this light, are clothed with a sort of abstraction, which is fitted rather to make the mind pause and reflect upon its own littleness, than to bring its powers into exercise in acts of intense and grateful homage.

But Christianity entirely relieves this difficulty. The Christian's God comes out as it were from behind the veil of his abstract perfections, and

brings himself directly in contact with our thoughts and feelings, I had almost said with our very senses, in the person of Jesus Christ. Here God is manifest in the flesh: the divine glory, as it shines in the face of his Son, is so softened, that we can gaze upon it without being overpowered by the vision. The actions of a God we can here view; the attributes of a God we can here contemplate; the authoritative declarations of a God we can here listen to, through the medium of a nature like our own. Oh, what condescension is here! Without diminishing aught from the majesty of the eternal and uncreated Spirit, Christianity brings that majesty, if I may be allowed the expression, within the immediate range of human vision; for "in Him," that is, in Jesus Christ, says the apostle, "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

4. The God of the infidel is *at best only the God of nature and providence*: the God of the Christian is *also the God of redemption*.

To the former let as much of perfection be attributed as reason can possibly conceive: be it that the infidel's God has made the heavens and the earth; that all that is beautiful, and grand, and useful in creation is the work of his hand. Be it that He rules the worlds which he has made by a providence, no matter how particular; that by his immediate agency he circulates the vital fluid in your veins, and arranges the most minute circumstances of your condition, and takes cognizance of every thing that passes within his dominions—though this is attributing more to the infidel's God than the infidel would himself attribute to him—but surely this is all. It is not even claimed for Him that He is a redeeming God. If the fact that man is a sinner is contemplated at all in the plan of his government, it is contemplated only as a sort of accidental matter which requires no distinct provision.

The Christian's God possesses every perfection and performs every work which the infidel attributes to his God. He is the creator of the ends of the earth, and he fainteth not, neither is weary, in upholding all things by the word of his power; and there is not a sparrow that falls to the ground, nor a leaf that trembles in the breeze, but his providence extends to it. But in addition to all this, and beyond all this, he is the God of redemption. In this character he exhibits himself in the mysterious threefold relation of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. In this character there is a new and more magnificent display of his attributes; a softening of those which appeared stern, a blending of those which seemed opposite, justice and holiness and faithfulness and mercy, all beaming forth in man's salvation. Here, after all, is the grand distinction between the God of the infidel and the God of the Christian. The one is, and the other is not, encircled with the glory of a Redeemer. The one is, and the other is not, reconciling the world to himself by Jesus Christ.

II. Keeping this contrast of character in view, let us proceed to inquire *whether the infidel's or the Christian's God is best adapted to exalt the character of man; and to meet his necessities.*

1. Which is best adapted to *exalt the human character?*

That we may come to a satisfactory conclusion on this point, let us see whether a belief in the one or the other is fitted to exert the *greatest amount* of influence.

That a belief in the Christian's God is the more influential is evident from the fact that *He is a Being with whom man is brought into more immediate*

*contact.* Of two objects, other things being equal, that exerts the most powerful influence, which bears most directly upon our condition, which mingles itself most with our thoughts, and operates upon us most constantly, and meets us in the greatest variety of circumstances. But we have seen that the infidel's God is a being who takes comparatively little interest in human concerns; that he is too lofty to condescend to the meaner affairs of this world, and is clothed with a degree of abstraction which seems to remove him almost beyond the range of human conceptions. We have seen, on the other hand, that the Christian's God meets him everywhere; that He is the strict observer of all his actions; that he marks even the most secret feelings of his heart with reference to a retribution; that in infinite condescension he manifests himself through the medium of man's own nature; and that the whole scheme of his government in respect to redemption is fitted to keep the eye of man intensely fastened upon the character of God. Who then can doubt that a belief in the God of the Christian is the most operative?

Then again, a belief in the Christian's God exerts the greatest amount of influence, because *there is far more in his character to make an appeal to the active principles of our nature.* Take, for instance, the principle of gratitude, one of the most powerful principles of the human breast—how much more is there to waken this into exercise in the character of the Christian's God than of the God of the infidel! How much more has the former done than the latter, how much more is he doing every hour, especially as the God of redemption, for the benefit of man! Confidence too—another powerful principle of action—there is much more in the Christian's God to awaken this; for not only does he confer greater present benefits than the other, but he has condescended to make the most glorious promises, and write them down, and even seal them with blood, and moreover fulfils them in the Christian's every-day experience. And even the principle of fear, the Christian's God appeals to with more success than the God of the infidel; for the awful attributes of his character come forth with more distinctness, and his threatenings are a matter of fearful and certain record, and even while he sits upon the throne of his mercy, He proclaims to every sinner that he is in danger of everlasting burnings. And the same is true of all the other active principles of man's nature: a belief in the God of the Bible is incalculably more sovereign in its influence over them than a belief in the God of the infidel.

We arrive then, on two separate grounds, at the conclusion, that a belief in the Christian's God exerts the greatest amount of influence. But we all know that a cause may operate powerfully, and yet not benignly, upon the human character. It is necessary therefore, in order to establish the point we have in view, to show that the same belief exerts not only the greatest amount, but the *noblest kind*, of influence.

And that we may come at the truth on this point in a single word, let me ask you to bear in mind that *from the very constitution of our nature, our characters become assimilated to the object of our supreme homage.* The only question then is, if indeed it be a question, whether the infidel's God or the Christian's God is the more excellent and glorious? If you doubt, then say whether you regard that Being the more glorious who has no certain character, or the Being whose character is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever? Whether is it more glorious to take a sort of general supervision of the works of his hands, leaving much to the caprice of accident, or to behold every

thing with an eye of watchful regard, and to direct every thing by the dictates of infinite wisdom? Or is it more glorious to exist merely in the abstract perfections of his nature, or to exhibit his attributes in higher though softer majesty in the person of his Son? Or finally, is it more glorious to exist only as the Creator and the Ruler of the world, or also as its Redeemer; to put forth no effort for the salvation of man, or to make a new and loftier development of his character, and to exhibit a union of apparently opposite attributes in the combined grandeur and loveliness of a righteous and forgiving God? The Christian's God then does possess a more exalted character than the God of the infidel: it follows therefore, from the law of our nature to which we just adverted, that a belief in the former exerts the nobler influence.

Our first inquiry then is answered. If a belief in the God of the Christian exerts at once the greatest amount of influence, and the noblest kind of influence, we come fairly to the conclusion that it is best fitted to exalt the human character.

But I cannot dismiss this point without making an appeal to *facts*. Consult then the records of infidelity and the records of Christianity, or bring your own observation to testify on this subject, and tell me where you find the most of true moral dignity and excellence. I do not say that you cannot point me to a character which has been formed under the influence of a belief in the infidel's God, that is not entirely shorn of the naturally amiable qualities that belong to human nature; but I challenge you to point me to one, which, in the sober estimate of even the infidel's conscience, exhibits a high degree of moral virtue. You may now and then find a man of this description, who is inoffensive in his intercourse with his fellow-men, and whose character is not stained with open vice; but never will you find one of lofty virtuous aspirations; never one whose actions are conformed to a high standard of moral excellence; and in the great majority of instances (I dare say it with all the records of infidelity spread out before me) you will find the infidel a selfish, grovelling, not to say a malignant being. He, on the other hand, who sincerely trusts and devoutly worships the Christian's God, exhibits a character which bears the genuine impress of moral worth. Not only the external actions, but the thoughts, the purposes, the feelings, the whole man rises up continually towards the perfection of virtue. Where will you find characters formed by faith in the infidel's God like those of Howard, and Wilberforce, and Thornton, and Edwards, and a multitude of others, whose names illumine the record of Christianity? Bring by the side of these the names of Paine, and Bolingbroke, and Rousseau, and the whole catalogue of their associates, and the infidel himself, if he has not bid adieu to shame as well as to virtue, must blush at the comparison.

2. Our second inquiry is, whether the God of the infidel or of the Christian is best adapted to *meet man's necessities*?

Man needs a *guide*. His lot is cast in a world in which a variety of paths sometimes open before him, and he is at loss which of them either his duty or his safety requires that he should take. Some of these paths are thickly beset with snares, and he cannot enter them but at an incalculable hazard. There are opposite influences to which he is liable to yield, some of which may subserve his advantage, others conduce to his injury, and he is in danger of mistaking the one for the other. Hence he needs a faithful and infallible guide, whom he may consult with confidence in every variety of con-

dition. Such a guide he cannot find in his fellow-man; for he is as weak and ignorant, and liable to mistake as himself. It can be no other than the Infinite God; and let me say, it is the Christian's God, and not the God of the infidel. For what encouragement is there to apply for direction to the latter? Where has he made a promise that he will hear the prayers which are directed to him for guidance and aid; and is there any thing in the character which is attributed to him, especially as concerning himself little with human affairs, to warrant the belief that he *will* listen to the supplications of mortals? And let me ask whether the infidel himself does not feel this? Else how is it to be accounted for that infidels so rarely, if ever, pray; nay, that so many of them actually ridicule prayer as unnecessary and even absurd?

But the Christian's God is as far removed from the God of the infidel, in this respect, as the east is from the west. Not only is there every thing in his character to encourage the hope that he will hear the prayers which are offered him in sincerity and faith, but there is a direct promise;—a promise that he will grant his Spirit to guide his people into all truth, to preserve them from all error, to conduct them through difficulties, to resolve their doubts, and to give them confidence in the discharge of duty. This promise the Christian's God constantly fulfils, as every one who obeys and confides in him can testify. As you would not then abandon yourself to walk in perpetual darkness; as you would have a guide whom you may always consult without the possibility of being deceived, I would say, let this God be your God for ever and ever.

But man needs a *protector* as well as a guide; for he is not only in a world of darkness but of danger. Innumerable evils encompass him about, and there is not an hour or a moment but that he is walking amid perils, and for aught he can tell, may be walking on the borders of destruction. In these circumstances, he surely needs the guardianship of some superior Power. Will the infidel's God afford him the protection which he needs? But he is little more than an indifferent spectator of human affairs; and who has told you that he will concern himself with your condition at all? Does the infidel himself trust him? In seasons of calamity, when the world shows its dark side, and the heart is overburdened with sorrow; above all, in the final wreck of his nature, when the spirit pants for protection such as the world cannot give, does he ever call upon *his* God for relief; and does his God ever appear for him, granting the relief and consolation which he needs? I can point you to many an instance in which the infidel, at such an hour, has turned away from the being to whom he has professedly given his homage, and made an agonizing effort to approach the Christian's God, but I ask you to point me to one in which he has even seemed to trust the infidel's God; much more to one in which he has trusted and found a refuge. The truth is, that at such a season, reason and conscience get the ascendancy even in the infidel; and he is compelled to feel that to supplicate the being whom he is accustomed to call God for aid in these circumstances, were a mockery of his own woe. It were alike vain and absurd to fall upon his knees, and ask the special protection and favour of a Being, to whom he does not allow the exercise of a particular providence.

In the Christian's God, there is every thing to encourage confidence in him as a Protector. For his watchful care is universal and uninterrupted. His eye is everywhere, and his arm is irresistible. And while his providence is

in the highest degree particular, he has *promised* his special protection to those who put their trust in him. And the record of the fulfilment of this promise is written in the experience of all his people. The Christian has called upon God for deliverance in the day of his trouble, and he has been delivered. In the day of sickness, in the day of bereavement, in the day of death, trusting in the Lord, he has been enabled to rejoice with joy unspeakable. And where the Christian is not shielded from the arrows of adversity, even where he is not delivered from the hand of the destroyer, he enjoys the favour of his God still; for adversity is made to yield a harvest of blessing, and death becomes the gate of immortal glory. Well may he say, while he confides and rejoices in the divine protection, "Who is so great a God as our God?"

But finally, and above all, man needs a *Savior*. Is the God of the infidel or the God of the Christian best adapted to meet *this* exigency of his condition? There are those, I know, who treat sin, the great moral disease of man's nature, as if it were a mere matter to be laughed at; and of course nothing else can be expected but that they should deny the necessity of any redeeming interposition. But the truth is, that in all this there is little sincerity. The infidel is a man; and he is constituted like other men; and like other men he has a conscience, which sometimes raises a tumult in his breast, by convicting him of guilt and pointing his eye towards a retribution. Every man has evidence, independently of all external testimony,—evidence which he is sometimes compelled to feel—that he is a sinner, and as such is exposed to the divine displeasure; that woes heavy and appalling await him unless his sins are forgiven. Now suppose, that with that sense of sin which every man feels at some time or other, you were to think to draw near to the infidel's God for the remission of your sins, and the cleansing of your soul; and supposing him to be all that reason, by her best efforts, can prove him to be;—I ask you whether you do not perceive at once that your case would be well-nigh desperate? For it cannot be denied that well directed reason attributes to the Supreme Being perfect justice and holiness: of course these attributes require that sin should be punished; and the alternative is, that the infidel's God must either punish sin or sacrifice his perfection. When it is remembered, at the same time, that he has given no intimation of pardoning mercy, where is the shadow of encouragement to a sinner to seek forgiveness; or the shadow of hope that it can in any way be extended to him? And if the sinner takes counsel of his conscience, he will find that he needs not only to be forgiven, but sanctified; that a divine influence is necessary to give a right direction to the faculties and principles of his nature, and thus render him capable of spiritual enjoyment. Will you go to the infidel's God to seek *this* blessing? But where have you learned that He is a sanctifying God? Reason has not told you so. Conscience has not told you so. Nature has not told you so. Rely on it, you are groping in the dark, and may as well fold your arms and sit down in despair.

Turn now to the God of the Christian, and behold in him the Savior that you need! He reveals himself as the Lord our Righteousness, and the Lord our strength; as the just God and the merciful; as forgiving iniquity, not at the expense of his perfections, but in a manner which renders his perfections more gloriously conspicuous—through the sacrifice of his own Son. And he gives his Spirit too, as the Sanctifier of the people; to subdue their



rebellion, to implant within them a principle of holiness, and to train them up for an eternal residence in the heavens. I appeal to the noble army of martyrs, and the spirits of the just made perfect—the redeemed who cast their crowns at the foot of the throne, whether this be not so. And lest this should seem like a blind sally of imagination, I appeal to you, Christians, yet in the midst of your conflict,—to every one of you who worships the Christian's God in sincerity and in truth—whether it be not so. Can you not stand up and testify for your God, that when your conscience was burdened with guilt, he graciously removed the burden by the application of the blood of his Son; that while sin rankled unsubdued in your bosom, he struck a blow which disarmed it of its power; that in all your conflicts his grace strengthens you; and that you carry in your bosom a pledge that his grace will perfect your sanctification, and confer upon you an unwithering crown?

I cannot conclude without applying this argument in one word to a practical use. Let me ask then, who among you all will dare to trust his interests for time and eternity in the hands of the infidel's God? Dare you trust him as your guide, when there are so many devious paths in which you are in danger of being lost; especially when he has given you no promise of his guidance, and there is nothing in his character which should lead you to expect it? Dare you trust him as a refuge, when you do not know that he even hears the prayers which you send up to him in your trouble; and when you do know that there is not an hour of your life, but that every earthly refuge is liable to fail you? Dare you trust him as a Savior, when he claims no such character? Dare you approach him with your heart burdened with guilt, and plead with him for forgiveness, when he has said nothing and done nothing to inspire the least hope of pardon, and when, for aught that you can see, pardon must involve the wreck of his attributes? Dare you ask him to sanctify you, or grant you grace to help in time of need, when, as a sinner, you have forfeited every favor, and have become obnoxious to his wrath? Dare you trust him in the hour of your extremity? Dare you lift up your eyes to him on the bed of death, and ask him to save you: amid the shuddering of guilt, amid the convulsions of pain, amid the uncertainty, the darkness, perhaps the wailings, of that last hour, dare you, I ask, take the God of the infidel for your portion, and throw that deathless spirit of yours on his protection for eternity? Above all, dare you do this, when thousands who have done it before you have testified in the dark valley that they were without a refuge, and have died reproaching themselves for their wretched infatuation?

I know that there is not one of you but would shudder to answer these fearful interrogatories in the affirmative; not one who dares to sit down and deliberately count the cost, and then commit his interests for time and eternity into the hands of the infidel's God. And if you dare not do it deliberately, and with your eyes open, be not so infatuated as to leap inconsiderately into these territories of doubt, and horror, and death. Turn your eye then towards the God of the Christian, and you will find a Being infinitely venerable, altogether lovely; a Being, the devout contemplation of whose character will exalt you from glory to glory; whom you may confidently trust as a guide, a protector, and a Savior; who will sustain you by the right arm of his power and grace while the current of life is ebbing away; and who will keep your immortal spirit safe and happy amid the shocks of the last day.

But remember, that in order that the Christian's God may become your portion, you must yield your hearts and lives to his service. It is not enough that you profess your faith in him, or even that you have some emotions of sublimity or rapture in meditating on his attributes. You must love him, trust him, obey him. Then, I repeat, you may be fearless in adversity; fearless in death; fearless amid the funereal fires of the world.

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## SERMON CXXXV.

BY WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D.D.

ALBANY, N. Y.

### CHOOSING THE GOOD PART.

LUKE X. 42.—*And Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.*

Our blessed Lord, when he was on earth, partook largely of all the common sufferings of human nature. Though he was Lord of the creation, and could always have supplied his own necessities and those of his disciples by miraculous agency, yet, instead of availing himself of his divine power, he suffered many of his wants to go unsupplied, and for the supply of others he cast himself on the hospitality of his friends. There was a family at Bethany who were peculiarly endeared to him; who, in one case, at least, and probably in many others, experienced largely of his kindness, and with whom he seems always to have been a most welcome guest. Passing through their village on his way to Jerusalem, he called to see them; not in the spirit in which it is common to call upon people in these days, as a mere matter of ceremony, but from feelings of genuine affection, and with an earnest desire to do them good. The two sisters, Mary and Martha, seem both to have given him a most cordial welcome: though they exhibited their attachment and joy in very different ways: the one by endeavoring to provide for him an entertainment; the other by sitting at his feet, and listening to his instruction. Martha, observing the course which her sister was taking, in a moment of impatience, complained to the Master that she was left to serve alone, and begged of him the favor that he would bid Mary come to her assistance. But behold, Martha, who no doubt expected commendation, was met with rebuke! "Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful. And Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Is there not reason to believe that if our Lord were now on the earth, he might often find occasion to offer a similar rebuke? And to be plainer still, is there not reason to believe that many a woman, and many a good woman too, loses much of the benefit to be derived from intelligent and pious visitors,