

*body*, citizens of the same country, and heirs of the same inheritance. A provision has been made for them by the Lord of the house; that provision is in your hands, and that provision you *rob* them of. Instead of watching and praying, and acting with all good fidelity, as stewards of the establishment, you eat and drink, riot and fight, hoard or lavish, and contravene the plain intentions of your religion. What *account* do you expect to give of your stewardship! How will you meet your insulted Judge? With what emotions will you recognize your injured brethren! Are you not terrified by thoughts of the future? Or do you lay the flattering unction to your souls, and put the evil day far from you? You tell *us* to deal *honestly* with ourselves; but why do you not deal honestly with yourselves, and with *others* too? You conjure *us* not to deceive ourselves, because God is not mocked; and yet you eat the bread of deceit, drink the wine of the wretched and the lost, and mock God every day! If your religion is true, surely the Lord of such wicked stewards will come in an hour when they think not, and will cut them asunder, and appoint them their portion with the hypocrites. What else *can* he do with them?

“For your criminal negligence in relation to the interests of religion, you seek a shelter under the stale pretence of having *families*: as if *other* people had not families as well as you—as if the *poor* had not families, who, notwithstanding, give their pence and their half-pence, and make their charity sure though the means of their subsistence is precarious. But have you *all* got families? And are those of you who have *no* families, better stewards than those who have? And what if you have families? are you to rob God, rob the church, rob the world, and rob your own souls too, for the sake of your *families*? Is this reasonable? Is it righteous? Is it *religious*?

“But, you tell us, it is the *duty* of parents to lay up for their children; and that he who ‘provides not for his own, especially those of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.’ Now, we do not sup-

pose that religion destroys parental solicitude, or natural sympathies for near or distant relatives; what we suppose, and what seems to us incontrovertible is, that you should do all this, as indeed you ought to do every thing else, '*according to the scriptures.*' You ought to educate your children, to bring them up, and to regulate your whole financial policy, by the rules of the economy to which you belong. Sincerity, integrity, faithfulness in the inward part, require this. *More* we do not ask; *less* you ought not to offer.

"When stewards die '*wickedly rich,*' they are said to have robbed their masters, and the amount of their wealth shows the extent to which they carried on the plunder. But when religious stewards die rich, who have *they* robbed? The laws of religious stewardship, prohibits the christian from becoming rich; and did he live *like* a christian, he never would. He can become rich, therefore, only at the expense of the establishment to which he belongs; and it surely can be no credit to the steward, nor any compliment to his religion, to know, that though a steward, he was an *unjust* one; that though a christian, he lived and died in an *unchristian* manner; that he was sufficiently wicked and sufficiently witty—sufficiently tricky and talented, to embezzle his Lord's property. Yet this announcement, interpretatively and consequentially understood, every rich professor of religion makes at his death, or when his will is proved.

"Were those fearful responsibilities, contained in the doctrine of christian stewardship fully appreciated, you would shrink with instinctive horror from the idea of growing rich, and from the idea of antichristian establishments. You would bewail the death of a rich professor, as you bewail the death of an infidel. So unhappy an event would reflect as much disgrace upon the body of christians, as a case of felony, or an act of suicide, upon a family of noble blood. Instead of which, no lamentation is made, no wails are heard. The ambition, or great concern of most of you, is to fare sumptuously every day, to roll in worldly splendour, or acquire with avaricious grasp the '*worldling's portion.*' To live, so

as to be reckoned *faithful stewards*, and to have your memories blessed by the generations of the upright, is no great concern with you; your principal aim is to become men of wealth, not considering that your wealth is plunder and your aim dishonour. Greedily, and even boastfully, you add house to house, field to field, and one sum of money to another, forgetting that your acquisitions are unlawful. To gratify the lust for greatness, you call your houses after your own names, make unrighteous wills by leaving the bulk of your property to your sons; and for the sake of transmitting your names through single branches of your families, or to evade the thought of your injustice, some of you make no wills at all.

“How avariciously anxious are many of you after the things of this world,—not as *stewards* that you may promote your Saviour’s interests, but as proprietors and monopolists, that you may promote your *own*,—not that you may have larger donations for religious uses, but greater sums for your own service,—not that you may be *good stewards*, but that you may be *great men*. Instead of taking care of your Lord’s interests, and leaving him to take care of yours, you reverse the practice, and by taking care of your own exclusively, you leave him to take care of his as he can. Worldly greatness, not spiritual usefulness, is your prime concern. You lay up treasure on earth—contrary to the law of your religion; but are you rich towards *God*?

“The *voluntary principle*, according to *dissent*, is the essence of the gospel,—the mainspring of its operations in the world; and if explained upon the old fashioned doctrine of *stewardship*, we pronounce it a noble sentiment, and equal to all the claims of true religion. Had this principle been uniformly acted upon, religious instruction would long ago have been universal, religion would never have been allied to the state, nor would civil governments have ever taxed you for supporting a form of religious administration you could not approve, or for teaching doctrines you do not believe. But if you will not support voluntarily the religion you approve,

after having solemnly engaged to do so, and after having been supplied with means for that purpose, ought you to grumble, if the legislature take the business into their own hands and compel you to support that religion which they approve? It may be very wicked, and no doubt it is so, for civil governments to rob you 'according to law;' but then, as you have been accustomed to rob God, to rob the church, and to rob the country, time out of mind, 'according to the gospel,' we see not how you can gracefully complain. As to the violation of your *consciences*, there would certainly be something plausible about this, were it not for the fact, that *you* violated them long before civil governments thought anything about it. You violate them *now*—such of you, at least, as have any *to* violate; but stewards who are constantly defrauding their great Master, ought to stoop down and mutter in the dust when they say anything about *conscience*. Conscience! why, with seven of you out of ten, it is not conscience but covetousness—not your moral judgments but your immoral hearts which complain.

“The true import of the voluntary principle, you neither understand nor wish to understand. That principle—noble as it is—is dishonoured by your advocacy, and blasphemed by your practice. You appear to look upon it as that which involves a right *not* to support and extend religion—which supposes a right to *withhold* as well as to give—and as that which leaves you as free to *neglect* as to relieve the claims of religion; which are not mere blemishes in your logic, but fundamental errors in your practice. You talk—and what is far worse—you *act* as if the voluntary principle had nothing *imperative*—nothing *binding*; overlooking the transcendant fact, that it is the *law* of Christ, and, therefore, obligatory upon *all* who take *his* yoke and learn of *him*. You appear not to cherish, by any lively recollections, these important facts, viz. that the gospel is committed to your *trust*; that you are *obliged* by the law of your Prince; that he has entrusted to you the *public affairs of his kingdom*; that you are obliged by the

law of the throne, to *extend* as well as to uphold its administration; that your domestic establishments are to be *plain*, your habits *frugal*, and your appearances *simple and unostentatious*; that after providing for your families the necessaries of this life, you are to pay over the surplus to Christ's establishment, as God may have *prospered* you, and to see that it is fairly and honestly applied. *These* are the facts which make the voluntary principle *efficacious*, which render it elastic, and which make it equal to every demand made upon it.

“The voluntary principle assumes the excellencies and efficacy of your religion to be such, that to be a believer in its doctrines and a partaker of its blessings, is to have a gracious willingness to conform to its precepts, and to promote its interests to the utmost of the ability possessed; consequently, when you use this divine principle as a cloak for your covetousness, an opiate for your consciences, or a screen for your resentments,—when you pollute it by your sensuality, deform it by your avarice, or enfeeble it by your ambition,—when you hinder the progress of religion by it, oppress your ministers, defame christianity, and convert the hallowed essence into a carnal system,—when you do all these things, and yet call yourselves ‘dissenters’—‘stewards’—‘christians’—the ‘dear people of God,’ and the ‘persecuted sheep of Christ’s flock,’—when you offer us this sickening combination,—when you mix us this hypocritical draught, or compound us this fetid bolus, you provoke our disgust and inspire us with wrathful maledictions. You coerce us into one of two conclusions; either that your religion is one of no value, or that you must be hypocrites and knaves,—hypocrites, in pretending to be what you are not,—knaves, in cheating religion out of its equitable payments.

“And yet, you talk about converting the *world!* Why the world is no worse than you are; and if it were, you have not *heart* enough to alter it. You are too selfish, too indolent, too extravagant, too dishonest, and too unconcerned about the eternal interests of mankind, to call into requisition that amount of instrumentality

necessary to the accomplishment of so sublime a project? Convert the *world!* What, when you are as worldly as the world itself! What do you propose converting it *from*—what converting it *to*? Why, in all its essential features it is as much like you, and you are as much like it, as one blackberry is like another. How can wicked christians hope to convert wicked heathens, or dishonest stewards expect to make honest labourers? Pull the beam out of your own eyes, and then take the mote out of ours. Let us see the *church* converted, and then talk about the conversion of the *world*. Evangelize *yourselves*, if you expect to evangelize *us*. Let us have something to look at, and something to wish for.

“Come we to the *maxims* of your religion, the same discrepancy is perceptible. Religion, you say, essentially considered, is not a theory, but a principle,—not the definition of an idea, but the resignation of the heart; but with vast numbers of you, the only tangible part of your religion is a mere logomachy, or a striving about words to no profit. Were christianity a concatenation of quibbles, a farrago of whims and oddities, of hair-splittings and wire-drawings, we should say, the whole lives of many of you would be *strictly christian*. Religion not a *speculation!* Why, how many of you do nothing else but speculate? You not only reduce religion to a speculation, but you speculate *with it*, and *in it!*

“If religion is not a *theory*, how is it so many theories have been set afloat—so many fabrications constructed? Has not every denomination its creed, and is not more importance attached to creeds than to anything else? Domestic virtues, and moral actions, are measured and valued by a creed. You test everything by a creed; and try every philanthropic measure in a narrow monastic spirit. In a mystical, technical, and uncommon-sense style of language, you embody your religious ideas. Your intellects and time are employed in determining the most vexed of all questions, in threading the thorny mazes of barren controversy, and in being wise above what is written. Your ablest public

men are men who lose themselves—and those who hear them—in a wood of words ; while your judges in Israel are mere word-catchers,—men who sit in judgment upon your pulpits, and who locate themselves periodically in your sanctuaries—not that they may worship God in spirit and in truth, but that they may set on thrones of judgment, judging the ministers of the gospel.

“ These creeds are mere ropes of sand ; and they make ropes of sand of you. They generate the most bitter animosities, induce you to view one another as heretics, inspire you with bitter feelings and galling reproaches, make you grudge the right of private judgment, envy one another’s success, rejoice in one another’s injury, and hand you over as a prey to the teeth of your enemies. You are thus eternally divided, and morally inefficient. Hitherto, you have wrought no salvation in the earth, neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen. How should they ? There is nothing to make them fall. A worldly, selfish, speculative religion, is not the religion for spiritual conquest.

“ Religion, you say, is an *internal* thing, and, therefore, we are improper judges of it. But if it is *internal*, will it not be *external* also ? That which is in the well gets into the pitcher ; the goods in the warehouse are brought into the shop ; the tree is known by its fruits ; and, out of the *abundance of the heart* the mouth speaketh. If the kingdom of God were within you, would it not appear without you ? Supposing the foundations to be secret, the superstructure would be exposed ; and if the workmen were screened, their labours would be apparent. We do not deny religion to be an inward thing, but is it *all* inward ? Is it not visible as well as real ? If it is not, how can you be unto God for a name, and a praise, and a glory in the earth ?

“ We do not object to your religion, because it is *internal*, but because it is *not*. We object against you, not because you are *inwardly* right, but because you are *inwardly* wrong,—not because you are *full*, but because you are *empty*,—not because your religion is *spiritual*,

but because it is *worldly*,—not because it flourishes in your *hearts* or in your *homes*, but because it appears to exist nowhere, save in your *heads*, or in your *hymn books*,—not because you are secretly *righteous*, but because you are secretly *wicked*. You tell us the circumference must have a centre, the shadow a body, the body a soul, the tree a root, the practice a principle, and the effect a cause—all of which we can comprehend; but when you talk as if the centre had *no* circumference, the body *no* shadow, the soul *no* body, the root *no* stem, the principle *no* practice, and the cause *no* effect, you confound us by your nonsense or provoke us by your depravity. Let religion be inward—it will be worth little if it is not; but let it be outward also. The man who *lives* in private, may surely *appear* in public. The always-within man is an idiot, a cripple, a felon, or an impostor. He *may* be a puling nondescript, a bed-ridden invalid, or a maniac; but he is no type of inward religion, or of a religious man.

“True religion, you say, is not a notion or a thought, a system or a habit, but a *divine sentiment*. God, you affirm is *love*. Christ was an incarnation of *love*. The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of *love*. The religion of the bible is a religion of *love*. Love is the fertile source of your salvation, the image of God, and, subjectively considered, a sentiment so conspicuously divine that he who has it ‘dwelleth in God and God in him.’ As love is essential to God, in like manner it is essential to religion. He that loveth, is born of God; he that loveth not, hath not seen God, neither known him; for God is love, and he inspires his own affections in all who commune with him. Love is the ruling spirit of your economy, the distinctive feature of christianity. It is the opening and closing evidence of christian character; for a religion without love is a religion against God. The old law of nature, published by Moses, has been republished by Christ, and called a *new commandment*. This *new commandment* is the test of christian principles. He that observes it, is a christian; he that observes it not, lacks the grand constituent. You are to



love as people never did love—You are to love one another *as Christ* loved you. His love is at once your model and your motive,—a love developing itself in social converse, tenderness, beneficence, suffering and death. Your religion has three cardinal principles—‘faith, hope, and *charity*; but the greatest of these is *charity*.’ Language, knowledge, zeal, address, with gifts of the highest order, are ineffectual without *charity*. And what is charity but an embodiment of divine love, diffusing itself through all the dispositions and actions? ‘Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things.’ This is a portrait of charity, drawn by one of your inspired artists, and therefore by you deemed correct. ‘Behold the picture, is it like?’—like who? Why like *you*? Do you all *live* like the thirteenth chapter in the first epistle to the Corinthians? Do you *pray* to live like it? Is it your *study* to live like it? Do you keep the old commandment in a new manner—in a manner so truly novel, because so truly christian, as to excite surprise among your enemies, and so as to compel them to the remark—‘see how these christians love one another?’ Are you all *one in love*? Do ‘all men’ recognize you as the disciples of Christ, *because* you love one another? They do nothing of the sort. How can they? Instead of being filled, directed, and animated by love, you are filled with malice, with hatred, with contempt for one another, and with all unrighteousness. You are full of whisperings, backbitings, deceit, and covetousness. We see among you, envyings, strifes, confusion, and every evil work. You let loose all the malevolent passions; suspect, accuse, arraign, condemn, and gibbet one another. You pursue one another with an intensity of rancour, and with a malignancy of purpose, peculiar to yourselves; so much so, that instead of saying, See how

these people *love*! we have involuntarily to exclaim, See how these christians *hate*!

“We know you say, ‘O the world is an hospital of ill nature, and its inmates are always finding fault with those who have been in, got better, and come out.’ But do not you find fault with one another, and watch, and lie in wait for one another? Is not the most upright of you sharper than a thorn hedge? Do you not win the confidence you intend to betray, and bare the bosom you design to pierce? You say, ‘O the world will say anything, and are always delighted to slander us.’ But are there not among yourselves those who will say anything? And do you not slander one another, not excepting your own ministers, who labour among you, and who, you say, are ‘Over you in the Lord?’ Why, you not only circulate, but invent,—not only criminate, but exaggerate—misinterpret, pervert, and libel and defame one another, to our hearts content. There is no need for our scandalizing you, seeing you scandalize one another; and seeing you do the business more effectually than we know *how*. Reckless about the public credit of christianity, and about its progress in the world, you gratify, as far as you can, or rather as far as you *dare*, your respective antipathies and enmities,—convert your love into hatred, your profession into a farce, and the weapon of your religion into the poignard of the assassin.

“Religion, you remark, not only penetrates, but permeates,—not only translates, but transforms,—not only moves, but governs. According to your description, it operates upon all that is called emotive, changes the whole mental economy, and breathes into the new-made man the dispositions of God. It tempers the clay and puts it into a new mould, containing a divine likeness which is imparted to the yielding material, and by virtue of which a new figure is produced, a new spirit imbibed, and all the sanctified powers of mind called willingly forth into a holy service. Such is the description you frequently give of religion; and if we judge of

it by your description, what must we think of *you*? What must you think of *yourselves*?

“Another of your maxims is ‘religion requires the full exertion of the entire man.’ Its doctrines, you remark, demand the full employment of his mental faculties; its duties, the furthest stretch of his endeavours; its truths, the holiest exercise of his faith; its promises, the greatest exertion of his hope; its worship, the choicest portion of his time; and its prospects, the noblest exercise of his waiting spirit. This is your tale; but it is neither your experience nor your practice. We look at your intellectual powers, and we see them given to the world; at your moral endeavours, and they are secular; at your faith, and it is carnal; at your hope, and it is temporal; at your worship, and it is formal; at your prospects, and, like ours, they are confined to the ‘life that now is.’

“Christianity, you say, is not a perception, but a principle,—not a recognition, but a consecration. But where is the evidence of *your* consecration—where the truth of your separation from the world, and of your dedication to God? Is it at all clear that your whole spirit, and soul, and body, are sanctified to holy uses?—That you are inwardly and outwardly, habitually and obviously, devoted to spiritual objects?—That you are holiness unto the Lord, and the fruits of your increase sanctified to his honour?—That you are alienated from the world, in fact and in practice, in affection and desire? Where is the proof of these assumptions? Where the dignity of your principles, the holiness of your lives, the fragrance of your devotions, and the ardour of your zeal? To all appearance you give your heads, your hearts, and your hands to the world. In the world you shine like seraphs; in the church like pillars of ice. In things secular, you are lamps of light; in things spiritual, you are lumps of lead. Where the world is concerned, we observe no lack of diligence, self denial, effort, or perseverance; but in the duties, the tempers, the aims, the ends and the honours of religion, we perceive a shameful and criminal deficiency. Your religion is without life,

your profession without power, and your lives without honour.

“In harmony with these presiding maxims, you pronounce religion to be a spiritual, and therefore spiritualizing element. But does it spiritualize *you*? How many of you make *spirituality* another name for *depravity*? You are dogmatical, conceited, full of ill-nature, and thoroughly penetrated by worldly motives! Your spirituality makes you surly, self-righteous, and magisterial; and is clearly a *deception*, seeing it leaves you as destitute of religious dispositions as are the objects of your luscious vituperations. You have a number of spiritual nouns and adjectives, with a few evangelical articles; but your verbs, and your adverbs, are all worldly. As boys string egg-shells, so you string words and phrases; and your words and phrases—however combined—are as empty of spirituality as egg-shells of food. You tell us our religion is not religion,—that it has nothing of its nature and none of its attributes, and that it is a mere phantom—a spectre—a delusion—a non-entity; but apply the same language to your spirituality, and while equally descriptive it will be infinitely more emphatic.

“Again, religion, you say, is not a *contemplation*, but an *assimilation*; and therefore are believers changed from glory to glory into the image of Christ. They are not only justified, but sanctified; not only pardoned, but renewed. They have not only the *name*, but the *nature*; not only the *desires*, but the *dispositions* of children. These have not only a righteousness imputed, but an image imparted; and if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Now *He* was full of grace and truth; what are some of you full of—sin and deceit? He went about doing good; what do some of you go about doing?—whispering, backbiting, talebearing, scattering the coals of dissension in the world, and sowing the seeds of discord among brethren! He was a *true* light; but what lights are *you*? He lighted every man that came into the world; how many have you lighted—how many have you attempted to light? He sought

not to please himself; but who besides self do you seek to please? His meat and his drink was to do the will of him that sent him; is your mental aliment of the same description? He laid down his life for his saints; what have you done for them? He was an incarnation of all excellencies; but what is the character of your compound? Likenesses! why most of you are contrasts, not resemblances—caricatures, not copies. You tell us you have many doubts and fears about us; but we have none about some of you, and wonder how you can have any about yourselves! If the limner is to be judged of by his portraits, the musician by his music, the architect by his fabrics, the manufacturer by his goods, that rule at once determines our decision in relation to great numbers of you.

“If religion is worth anything, you frequently say it is worth everything, and should therefore be a prime consideration—the main object indeed of life. Christians, you say, should seek first the kingdom of God, and leave their worldly anxieties with providence. But how few of you appear to act in this rational way! Your anxieties are not about your souls, but your bodies,—not about the church, but the world,—not about spiritual, but carnal matters. You seek not religion in the first place, but the last,—not as a principal, but as an inferior matter,—not as that which *must* be attended to let what will be neglected, but as that which *may* be practically regarded, when you have nothing else to do, and when sleep will not assist you. Instead of placing religion in a first class carriage, you place it in the penny-a-mile vehicles. Instead of placing it *foremost* in the procession, you place it at the *tail*, and sometimes not even *there*! You treat it not as a guide, but as a child,—not as a master, but as a servant,—not as a sovereign, but as a slave! You look upon it, not as a principle to guide *you*, but to be guided *by* you,—not to *rule*, but to be *ruled*,—not to *save* you, but to *serve* you! Instead of doing homage to religion, religion is compelled to do homage to you, or quit your houses and your premises! Instead of being moulded into the will of

religion, religion must be moulded into yours ; and instead of subjecting the claims of the world to the claims of religion, you do exactly the reverse. You are constantly putting religion in the place of the world, and the world in the place of religion ; and, as if born under the ruler of reverse, and nurtured for the sake of its illustration, you contradict all your established maxims, pervert the simplest truths, and urge us to conclude, that if your aphorisms are true your conduct is senseless beyond the power of language to express.

“ Another of your recognized maxims is,—‘ religion is a good calling, but a bad trade.’ We will not deny religion to be a good calling, but on what grounds are we to believe that you were ever *indentured* to it ? Few of you are ever apprenticed to the secrets of religion, and those of you who are, seldom bide your time. Many of you abscond, others breed daily riots in the family, neglect their business, form objectionable associations, and by one device or another get their indentures cancelled. Only a few of you seem to understand religion as a divine calling, fewer still who follow it, while only a *very* few make it their *principal* calling. You appear to learn religion—some of you at least—as some cunning people learn trades,—not because they like them, nor yet because they mean to follow them, but because they must learn something—because a trade is the easiest thing they can learn, and because, if they learn not it they are sure to learn something else.

“ But if religion is a bad trade, how is it so many of you trade in it ? How many of you take up religion—not because you like it, but because you like something else better ? You have alliances to form, marriages to effect, speculations to promote, and, it may be, many other ends to answer, all of which require a recognition of religion and perhaps a profession of it ; for these reasons you become serious, extol the minister, talk about your feelings, join churches—sometimes to be expelled as soon as you have joined—and many other things you do purely from secular motives. Even your ministers, who above all persons again ought to be free

from mercenary motives, sell themselves; and, if not by auction, or in the market, yet at market's price, and to the highest bidder. You complain of the established clergy, and of the two universities, and your complaints are founded in reason; but what are many of your dissenting teachers, and the places of their instruction? Are not your academies, or colleges as you begin to call them, religious manufactories, and your students spiritual tradesmen? Do they not learn religion as other people learn trades, and for the sake of trading in it? Do they not learn to dress, and talk, and smirk, and gesticulate, and play unnumbered antics? Is not their religious odour referrible to the toilet, and their unction to the skill of the perfumer? Is not the whole of their lives illustrative of the secularity of their motives—of the jobbing and trading system? Too frequently, alas! is religion an article of traffic. Your religious edifices are halls of commerce,—you have the world for your market, the church for your exchange, and you do business on Sundays. Your ministers promote this traffic, job in the funds of the church, raise the tariff when they can, and, however spiritual, they are, for the most part, little else than *mercantile evangelists*.

“Furthermore, you tell us, that religion consists not in definitions, in speculations, in contemplations, or in sensations, but in a spiritual *tone and state of mind*,—that it is not a place, but a nature,—not an impression, but a disposition,—not an emotion, but a temper,—not a circumstance, but a case. You complain, and that justly enough, of the formalism of churchmen: of their periodical pietism, their quarterly preparations, and their lack of habitual, spiritual, and devout religion. But against the majority of dissenters, may not the same charge be preferred? As to what you call inward, daily, experimental religion,—a religion which tempers the mind, regulates the affections, directs the pursuit, is *every where* and in all places the *same*, we see but little more of it among dissenters than among churchmen;

and in a vastly preponderating majority of instances, we see nothing of it at all.

“ From your best preachers and writers, we learn that prayer is the life of the soul ; and that this exercise is spiritual, spontaneous, fervent, and of course—*sincere*. But if professors of religion live only while they pray, and pray only when they pray in this manner, they must be the most ephemeral beings on earth. Pre-composed prayers, you say, are fixed, frigid, formal, and formalizing ; and are not yours even the same ? *Yours* are learned partly by hearing and partly by reading, and are so regularly ambled over, that their length, breadth, periods, and pointings—where they have any—might as well have been stereotyped prayer-book wise as not. Churchmen, we know, gabble over the liturgy without reverence, appear at church without being there, and say a thousand sensible things without a grain of meaning. We know they dissemble before God, cloak the sins they profess to lay open, and pretend to a world of sorrow without a spark of repentance ; but may not the same things, in substance, be laid to your charge also ? You say the Lord looketh at the *heart*, and we admit your argument ; but what does he see when he does look ?—a garden or a wilderness ?—devotion or deception ? Does the dignity of the worship *emphaticise* your feelings, or the majesty of the object command your reverence ? Look at your prayer-meetings, and what shameful absenteeism ! What lounging, as if in a bazaar ! What reclining, with folded arms, or legs stretched lengthwise on the forms ? What observation of persons, of dress, and of objects perfectly alien to spiritual worship ! How many of you amuse yourselves by turning over the leaves of your tune-books, your hymn-books, or your bibles ! As far as human penetration goes, your devotion *comes from nothing*—and it *leads to nothing*.

“ *Church-prayers* you pronounce to be mediums of mockery, seeing they create a discordancy between the lips and the heart ; but how many confessions do you make to God, the truthfulness of which, were we to



credit, would fill you with alarm and anger. Even in your own apprehensions, are you either half so bad, or half so good, as you pretend to be? Do you not humble yourselves before God, that you may be exalted among men, and by the habitual use of strong dyslogistic terms, somewhat artistically applied, depreciate yourselves into every virtue and contrive to be *abominably good*?

“ We do not say that you are hypocrites, but are you always *quite sincere*? You pray, for instance, that God would search and try you; when you never search and try yourselves. You intreat God to examine your hearts and your reins, while you neglect the exercise yourselves, and would be glad for God to do it without disturbing your repose or changing your pursuits. You confess the treachery and wickedness of your hearts, and then beg of God to search and penetrate you to *see* if there be any wicked way in you—any latent vice! You ask him to do for you that which you never do for yourselves, although the performance of it is a daily duty! Why do you pray, as if you knew of no sin—inward or outward—and had no wish to indulge it? Why do you supplicate for grace to subdue corruptions, against which you seldom struggle, and which you have no heart to mortify? How often do you pray to be delivered from temptations against which you never watch, and from sins over which you never mourn? The scrutiny you ask God to make, is a scrutiny you dare not make yourselves; because the detection of vice implies its expulsion, and for this sacrifice you are not prepared. You would be saved, but not sanctified, changed but not altered. Hence you pray for conquest when there is no conflict; and for assistance when there is no effort. The very evils you mean to pursue, and the imprudencies you take no pains to avoid, you pray to be kept from! How frequently you beg of God to make you what you never wish to become, and what would make you very unhappy did you know you ever would become! You ask the Lord to lead you in a *right* way, without shewing any

disposition to change your old course! You say you wish to be *more* spiritual, but we never see you making any effort to become so! How fervently you appear to clasp the world to your hearts, at the very moment you are praying to be severed from it! and how fervently your desires travel in quest of worldly delights, while formally seeking to be filled with all the fulness of God! The *power* of religion you often ask for; but without the least desire to be transformed by it. You would be pardoned, but not purified; delivered, but not devoted; translated, but not transmuted. The truth is, did you know that you were no longer to accumulate, to indulge, or to make 'a show openly,' like the rich youth in the gospel, you would leave the house of God, as he left the Saviour, 'very sorrowful.'

"How frequently are your hearts going after your covetousness, while your lips are lent to its reprobation. How sedulously you nourish your various lusts, while you pray to be cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God! How carefully, and even angrily, you close your eyes against those truths which relate to the dispositions and practice of christians, though you constantly pray to have the eyes of your understanding enlightened, and to be led into all truth! The 'fruits of the Spirit,' is a term some of you are very fond of; but the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: qualities in which you are remarkably and criminally deficient. As far as your religion is susceptible of human analysis, the sum of it appears to amount to this: A strong desire, blended with a feeble hope, that God will do all that is necessary to be done for you and done in you, without any concern or even concurrence on your parts; thereby leaving you the full exercise of your powers, and the free gratification of your desires, in relation to your 'time in the flesh.'

"*Providence*, you scruple not to inform us, is a doctrine of divine revelation, and may certainly be depended on. It is universal, minute, continuous, and efficient.

It exists for the sake of the saints, to whose interests it has subordinated all things, and all beings. Luck, chance, and fortune, are the trinity of fools; wise men have different views, and different feelings. But wise and good as you are, you nevertheless talk—like infidels and heathens—about being lucky and unlucky. You have good luck, middling luck, bad luck, shocking bad luck, and no luck at all. You have your lucky days, lucky weeks, lucky signs, lucky folks, and of course your unlucky ones too! The secrets of providence you hold to be inscrutable, even by the highest archangel; yet by the help of a magpie, the screeching of an owl, or the spilling of a little salt, you obtain an insight! You have wise men, wise women, and what are equally important, and things much wondered at, wise *pigs* as well! Prophetic almanacks, astrologers, soothsayers, conjurers, fortune-tellers, &c. all find customers among the people of God! Palmistry, phrenology, physiognomy, cards, charms, incantations, are called in to disclose the future, over which infinite wisdom is said to have cast a veil no eye can penetrate, no finger can lift.

“Every thing, some of you believe, comes to pass according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; but does this prevent your petulancy, or promote your comfort? You cannot add to your stature, nor make a single hair white or black; but do these facts relieve your anxiety? God has ordered all things for the *best*; but does this reconcile you to his dispensations? All things are for the *elect's* sake; but are the elect satisfied? God's goodness is *equal* to his greatness: does this inspire you with confidence in his administration? Many facts are said to attest the benignancy of his providence, and many promises are made to those who confide in God; but do these allay your fears, or tranquilize your commotions? Are you more patient in affliction, or less disturbed by apprehensions of evil, than we who make no profession of religion? Are you more calm, or more resigned under the strokes of providence, than others? ‘He that be-

lieveth shall not make haste ;' but does your faith lead you to a calm repose in the protection of that Almighty Being under the shadow of whose wings you profess to trust? Does your confidence exonerate you from alarm, or prevent mental trepidation? Does it effectuate the 'work of righteousness which is peace,' and the 'effect of righteousness,' which is 'quietness and assurance for ever?' Does it satisfy your mind by simplifying your desires, and by learning you in whatsoever state you are therewith to be content? You trust yourselves in his hand; but then you do not feel secure. While the glory of your houses are increasing, and of course your wealth accumulating, you trust in nothing but *providence*; but no sooner is your treasure turned into new channels, and you have really nothing but providence to trust to, than you turn round and tell us you are 'ruined!' Your spiritual property may be as extensive and as valuable as you say it is; but you whine after your worldly wealth, like Micah after his idols; and like him you might affectingly enough exclaim, 'They have taken away my gods, and what more have I left?' How is this?

"The religion of Jesus Christ, you affirm to be eminently holy and strictly practical, so that if a man loves the Saviour, he will certainly keep his commandments; because love is the fulfilling of the law, and right affections make right actions. When the root is holy, the branches cannot be otherwise; and affections and actions, like roots and sprouts, stand related to each other as cause and effect. Faith without works is dead, being alone; and works without faith, are not the obedience of a *christian*. Living roots make living fruits; and living fruits are the proofs and produce of living roots.

"The simple duty of christians you maintain to be *obedience*. The christian is neither to *evade* nor to *invent*—to *neglect* nor to *multiply*, religious institutions. No bye-laws, no false glosses, no special pleadings are allowed. Partiality, you say, is not piety, nor good inclinations spiritual affections. Obedience must be ac-

tual, visible, spiritual, universal and continuous. Such are your declarations.

“The ministrations of the gospel are on no account to be neglected; yet how many of you neglect them?—neglect to attend them, to uphold them, to extend them, and to obey them? The *Sabbath-day* is to be kept holy, yet by how many of you is it *desecrated*?—desecrated by indolence, by distant visits given or received, by writing letters on business, by feasting yourselves without fear, arranging secular matters, and by a thousand other things? The *sacraments* you reckon very important, yet important as they are, how many of you are absent at the administration of the Lord's-supper?—absent through sheer indifference or private resentments; while great numbers, calling themselves christians, never observe it at all! *Baptism*, some of you believe to be restricted to *believers*, and to consist in a total immersion of the body. Yet how many of you are never baptized at all, although you confess it to be *imperative*? You content yourselves by saying, you are Baptists in *principle*, though not in *practice*; as if principle was *enough*! Would the farmer be satisfied by roots without grass, or seeds without blades? The truth is, no impartial examiner could infer from the character of many professing christians, that the christian religion has a character of *obedience*; that it requires a severance from the world, and a purification from its pollutions; that it enjoins the cultivation of the highest graces, and advancement in the noblest pursuits; that it seeks the improvement of all the social affections, and the repression of all malevolent passions; that by making them inwardly holy, it proposes making them outwardly righteous; and that, in fact, its main object is to make men *like God*, by converting them *to God*. All that could be inferred would amount to no more than this,—that religion, as interpreted by the conduct of those who profess it, is something to be believed—a recognition of arranged ideas—a creed—a speculation—a theory—a prejudice—a mere admission—a calculation—an assent, or something be-

longing to the intellect, and to the intellect *alone*. Who, thus studying religion, would ever imagine that the word *religion* supposed the purest sentiments, the holiest principles, and the finest motives—leavening the whole mass of mind, evangelizing the whole theory of morals, and weaving themselves into the whole history of a christian's experience and life? You must admit no person free from bias, could even dream that the christian religion meant an assemblage of the rarest excellencies, an economy of the choicest blessings, or a community of holy persons, possessing and displaying them in a course of simple uniform obedience.

“The *philosophy* of religion, you hold to be in accordance with the philosophy of mind; but your maxim controverts your practice. The gospel, you say, is a dispensation of means and ends, and the ends can be obtained only by the means; yet you constantly act as if you expected the ends without the means, and then murmur or marvel at your disappointment! Infinite wisdom, according to your judgment, has established a beneficial connexion of ways and means, by which the sovereign distributions of divine favour are regulated; and yet, singular enough, you habitually violate this connexion, and keep expecting divine favours as if no such connexion existed! What God hath joined no man should put asunder; yet you subvert the whole order of God's economy, blame his best servants, corrupt his best truths, and complain of everything save your own wickedness, and of every body, save your own tender-conscienced selves. The ordinances of religion you call *means* of grace; these means you neglect or undervalue, and then talk of darkness, temptation, and barrenness! God and mammon are out of God's connexion, and yet you are for ever uniting them in one way or other. No man can serve two masters, we read; yet you are unceasingly trying the experiment. He who is a friend of the world is an enemy of God; but you are ever trying to set aside the fact. The truth of the matter is, your religion considered *in itself*, is

spiritual; but you are carnal, and that creates the contrariety.

“To instance only a few particulars. You give chase to worldly phantoms during the week, and then cannot think how it is, that you should feel languid and breath-spent on a Sunday! Six days out of seven you give your hearts to the world, and then mourn because you cannot give them to God on the seventh! The lethal stream of worldlyism flows unchecked over your souls during the intervals of worship, and yet you affect to wonder how it is that you can retain so little of the gospel! You eat opium all the week, and then feel surprised you should feel sleepy on Sundays! Mental dissipations are cherished all the week, and then—astonishing to relate—you cannot command your thoughts in religious service! Your spiritual calling is daily neglected, and you then talk about giving it up, because it is *unprofitable*! You go to the house of God, as if you were going to a theatre or a ball—to a market or a fair, and then lament how little you *feel*! You carry with you a set of worldly dispositions, as if you could exchange them in the lobby, or in the vestry, for a set of totally different ones; and that as easily as you can exchange one dress for another! As if the costume of *mind* was to be as readily exchanged as a great coat or a cloak—as if cherished objects would depart at your pleasure, and desired ones come at your bidding—as if your natural tempers and worldly propensities were the most obsequious creatures in the world—as if they could be dismissed by a word, or banished by a magician’s wand! But how absurd is all this. How unreasonable to suppose the company you have kept during the week, should not find you on the sabbath; that the images which have floated incessantly before your minds for six days, should not draw attendance on the seventh; that the idols you have bowed down to on the ‘days of work,’ should not demand your homage on the ‘day of rest;’ or that the appetites you indulge at one period should have no cravings at another!

“Spiritual maladies are said to require a spiritual

remedy, and the spiritual remedy to imply a spiritual process. The gospel, you tell us, is designed to act upon the *disease*, and not upon the *imagination*. But if the gospel operates as a *medicine*, why do you employ it as an *amulet*, or a *charm*? Why do you fan the flames of sensuality all the week, with an expectation that they will cease the moment the sabbath dawns, your eyes are open, or you enter the house of God? During the week you commit all manner of sin, contract all kinds of diseases, and incur various heavy penalties, all of which are to be removed,—not by the salutary pains of deep contrition, humility, self-abasement, and inward purification,—not by a process which accompanies the healing balm, in wise reproofs and steadfast counsels—which says ‘go and sin no more,’—not by a process of this description, nor by any process at all, is the cure to be effected. The *pure* sovereignty of God is the magic wand, which, in the hand of your spiritual magicians is to cure everything at once, without any remorse on your part, or any displeasure on God’s!

“*Self-examination* you maintain to be a daily duty; but is it not a duty habitually neglected by nearly all of you—rich and poor? Those of you, who pretend to the performance of it, perform it partially, presumptuously, and inefficiently. You think a little, presume much, and jump to a conclusion. You look at the huddled mass, and because you see here or there a sprightly coloured virtue—a good deed, or it may be a few good intentions only, you infer a happy consequence. In taking stock, you measure off a few remnants, look over a few items in the day book, forget the ledger—if you keep one—think nothing of bad debts, bills, and old arrears, and thus strike a balance in your favour. Or, to use another figure, you try the sound parts, not the unsound; and by putting in the probe where there is no disease, conclude that all is right. Should a notorious ulcer exist, in some visible part, and to your great disfigurement, not to say mortification, *emollients* must be applied. *Salve* you will have at any price, *caustic* at none; and thus the proud flesh is left to



riot in the wound, the surgeon is blamed because it does not get well, or, your flesh is worse than any body's—it never will *heal!* How should it?

“Instead of dealing closely with your consciences, you deal loosely and jesuitically with them. You try the *tests*, instead of being tried *by* them. Instead of making the scriptures a balance, you put them *into* a balance; and instead of weighing *yourselves*, you weigh *them*. You measure the standard, when you ought to be measured by it; and judge the rule of your conduct, when that rule ought to judge you.

“*Dreams*, and *visions*, and *miracles*, you are accustomed to regard, as no parts of christian experience; but from Monday morning till Saturday evening, what are your mental processes, in so far as religion is concerned, but dreams and visions? And what are your religious perambulations on Lord's-days—your goings to and from your places of worship—but a specie of religious somnambulism? You are sleep walkers, and sleep talkers. How few of you are really awake! You sleep in the house of your God; and dream, and see visions as well. What are many of your joys and dissatisfactions—your objects and reflections—your temptations and difficulties—your thinkings and judgments, but dreams and visions? Of how many may it be said, your religion is a dream and your profession a form?

“Then as to *miracles*; during the week you are affected by a religious ague, and by many other complaints—such as ill temper, wrath, malice, envy, hatred which is murder, and covetousness which is idolatry; all of which are to be removed—like so many warts—by a charm, a miracle, or a nap. Like colliers, you are underground all the week—as worldly as the worldliest, as dirty as the dirtiest; and then on a Sunday morning you affect to wonder at your condition, marvel exceedingly that you should be such wretches, talk about free grace, obtain relief by finding others as dirty as yourselves—and as willing to talk about it—and by listening to a discourse nicely adapted to the filthiness