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THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED: THEIR DIFFERENCE:

A Sermon, by REV. ROBERT RYLAND, President of Richmond College, Richmond, Virginia.

“Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.”—Malachi iii: 18.

Among the cotemporaries of the prophet Malachi, there seems to have been a disposition to confound the service of God with that of the world. They contended that in point of *character*, the wicked were as upright as the servants of God; and that in respect to *advantage*, the scale turned rather in *their* favor. “Ye have said, it is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.” They submitted to no sacrifices for their Maker—lost no time in his worship—imposed no restraint on their self-indulgence. The prophet, however, mentions *one distinctive mark* of the true servants of God, and one prominent *advantage* appertaining to their character. “Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it: and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.” Nay, more. Alluding to the decisions of the future, he adds: “And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a

man spareth his own son that serveth him." He then announces the conclusion to which all his previous remarks had tended, and to the consideration of which you are affectionately invited: "Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." The subject before us is the *difference between the righteous and the wicked.*

1. In their intellectual habits.
2. In the exercise of the heart.
3. In their outward deportment.
4. In their future destiny.

I. The colors of the rainbow are so intimately blended, that it is difficult to say where one terminates and another begins. Yet the colors themselves are manifestly different. So it is in the case before us. There is a radical difference between sin and holiness; but the characters of men are graduated so variously between these extremes, that it is sometimes hard to decide to which of the two classes they respectively belong. When the merely natural man has been carefully trained by intelligent and godly parents; when his reason and his conscience have been developed by judicious education; and his manners refined by long association with the polite; and especially when his passions are held in check by deference to public opinion, and his temper naturally amiable, he approaches very near, in appearance, to a real christian. On the other hand, some sincere christians are so much under the dominion of ignorance and prejudice—so unformed in their manners—and so unlovely in their native disposition, that grace is sadly obscured and marred, if indeed charity can hope that it exists in them at all. Now, although these two classes of human character run into each other in the manner described, yet a close inspection will disclose properties peculiar to each and widely dissimilar.

There is difference not only in the conclusions formed in regard to revealed truth, but in the amount of consideration given to it by the two classes. The wicked seldom meditate on the character and government of God—on the developments of the great system of divine Providence—on the relations and responsibilities of the creature to the Creator—on the odious and destructive nature of sin—and on the

wonderful arrangements of God for its forgiveness and removal. "The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God. *God is not in all his thoughts.* His ways are always grievous—thy judgments are far above out of his sight." Even those thoughts that obtrude themselves on the reluctant attention of the ungodly are vague and indefinite. Resulting from early prejudices, not carefully derived from the inspired oracles; not incorporated with the warm, approving affections of the heart, they cannot be said to illustrate the saying of the apostle "*receiving the truth in the love of it.*" They rather disturb than comfort the mind—they are, therefore, resisted more than cherished. "I remembered God and was troubled," is the most truthful confession that a man unreconciled to his Maker could utter in respect to the effect of his faith. Surely the feeblest servant of the most High is far otherwise in relation to his perception and appreciation of revealed truth. In the deep recesses of his mind he often ponders the great subjects of religion. While his hands are busied about the needful affairs of this life, his spirit wanders far off on more congenial subjects, and dives into the unfathomable mysteries of godliness. The glorious perfections of Deity—the sublime disclosures of his wisdom and love in the redemption of man by the sacrifice of Christ—the moral beauty, and fitness, and fulness of that Redeemer—the immense obligations to love and obedience that he has imposed on us by his unsolicited and unbounded love to us—these and kindred thoughts find a home in the bosom of the righteous man. They are invested with all the interest of living, present realities. He often reviews the ground of his hope and the evidences of his discipleship. He brings himself, with all his feelings, and principles, and conduct, to the divine standard of faith and morals, and passes a severe judgment on his entire character. Thus we see that if we could read the intellectual history of a righteous and a wicked man for a given period, we should discover a marked difference in their trains of thought and in all their mental habits.

II. But this diversity is still more apparent when we come to examine the affections of the heart. The gospel claims this part of our nature as the theatre for its most striking exhibitions. In all its doctrines, and facts, and motives,

and influences, it appeals through the understanding to the heart. One of its prominent teachings is, first make the tree good, and then its fruits will be good—that is, renew the heart, and the life will be holy. In accomplishing this result, the subject of it is conscious of certain exercises of mind usually called "*experience*." I will not contend for a name—perhaps some other would do as well. I will not deny that some persons have made too much of experience, though still more have made too little of it, but I maintain that the gospel produces in the heart of all its sincere believers, *emotions peculiar to themselves* and wholly unlike those which the merely natural heart entertains. These emotions are generically the same in all cases, while they present, in each individual, some points belonging only to him. As every human face is sufficiently like all others to enable us to decide at once that it is a human face, and yet possesses some peculiarity to designate it from all others, so every christian has the general features of his family, and yet no two are in all respects absolutely equal. To specify—

1. The righteous feel a habitual, deep-seated conviction of their own unworthiness. Light has broken in on their minds and revealed the hidden corruptions of their nature. When they compare themselves with the broad and spiritual demands of the divine law; when they bring their naked souls into society with the awful and spotless Deity; when they analyze all their motives and secret springs of thought, and weigh them in the balances of the sanctuary; when they review their past lives and contrast them with all the mercies and all the forbearance which they have received: they are filled with deep self-abhorrence. And even while they enjoy a hope of pardon and acceptance, the habitual state of their minds is that of self-abasement before their God. But wicked men are comparatively at ease on this whole subject. They look on sin as a very small and a very common matter. If conscience whispers guilt to their souls, her voice is unheeded or silenced. They remain wrapped up in the mantle of indifference or self-complacency, and when their composure is disturbed, they labor to excuse themselves—to extenuate their faults and thus to evade the convincing power of the law.

2. The righteous cherish a vivid, a realizing, an appropriating trust in the merits of the Saviour. Faith with

them is not merely an intellectual process—a deduction logically drawn from admitted premises—but a cordial submission to the authority of Christ; an acquiescence in the entire system of means which God has proposed for our recovery. It is a living principle of the soul which grasps the awful realities of the unseen world and brings them, as motives, to bear on the duties and trials of the present life. Now, the most that an unregenerate man can claim for himself, is that vague and inoperative belief which education may have imparted; the careless assent of the mind to truths which the heart does not admire, and which do not impel to holy obedience; a belief which does not unseal the deep fountains of feeling in the soul, and which does not bring its possessor into a state of intimate communion with God. In fact, the faith of the nominal christian consists rather in the absence of scepticism, than in the apprehension of the distinctive doctrines of the gospel.

3. The predominating desire of the godly man is to please the Master in heaven. He may occasionally lose sight of the great end of his existence. The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, may, at times, obscure from his view the prize of his high calling—but, like the needle vibrating, yet finally settling to the pole—his desires will ultimately go out after God and concentrate on His glory. He feels that he belongs to Jesus Christ—that with a great price he has been redeemed from the bondage of Satan and from the pains of the second death, and that henceforth nothing short of a personal and an unreserved dedication to his service can satisfy his claims. He may not always be occupied in purely religious duties; but whatever employment engages his attention—whether sacred or secular—his design is to secure the divine approbation and promote the divine glory. He may, indeed, often come short of this high standard of piety. Still he approves and adopts this standard. He may fall into temptation and sin grievously against the commands of God; but this is rather a violation of his design, and a departure from his principles, than the legitimate execution of them. His *intention, his deliberate, honest, settled purpose is, to do his duty*—to avoid whatever is unjust to man and offensive to God—and to attempt every thing that his relations to both render obligatory. *Is this your character?* The wicked,

on the contrary, are animated by desires that have but little reference to the approbation of the final Judge. "How can I advance my interests? How promote my reputation? How enlarge my estate? How provide for my family?" These are the great absorbing inquiries of the carnal mind. Supreme selfishness is its besetting sin. If it rise one step higher and enter the regions of patriotism and public spiritedness, or the yet more refined atmosphere of sympathy and universal brotherhood, still it has not God for its object and its end. Why do you love your fellow-creatures? Is it because they are, like yourselves, the offspring of the Creator; and because he has required you to love them as you do yourselves? Or is it merely the impulse of your nature, not guided by principle and not dictated by a reverence of the Supreme? If the latter, whatever of amiableness you should be acknowledged to possess in regard to your fellow-man, you may not, on that account, claim a share in that righteousness which consists in allegiance to God.

4. Not to specify any farther the affections distinguishing the two classes, we observe that *generally* there is a material difference between the inward character of the two. The one is carrying on a *warfare* against sin in his members—a warfare that demands vigilance, and effort, and spiritual armour on the right hand and on the left—a warfare in which the soldier of Jesus is often so pressed by danger, as to be made to cry out in the anguish of his soul, for help from on high. The unregenerate are strangers to these inward conflicts with the powers of darkness. Being no resistance, there is no contest. They are led captive by the devil at his will, and they never feel the chains of spiritual bondage till they begin to struggle against their thralldom. The children of God experience a lively and fervent affection for each other. It is their evidence of discipleship—their bond of union—their unvarying and universal characteristic. No matter in what climate born—no matter in what dialect conversing—no matter by what mode of worship edified: all the real lovers of God find their affections excited by the discovery of the image of the Master. The unconverted either conceive a positive aversion to the people of God as such, or at most feel towards them a perfect indifference. There is no community of interests; no con-

geniality of tastes; no sympathetic chord vibrating in union between them. They consider religion a good thing—the professors, when consistent—an orderly and useful class—and if they will keep their religion to themselves, and not obtrude it on their attention, or disturb their enjoyments, they can get along quite well with them. But if the people of God rise to their true position, as the uncompromising reprovers of sin however elegant or fashionable—as the fearless witnesses of truth however cutting to mortal pride—and as the bold aggressors on the empire of darkness in every form—if they press, with earnest zeal and repeated solicitations, the claims of the gospel on the personal attention of the ungodly—pulling them out of the fire—alas! how quickly will decided opposition betray the secret enmity of the carnal mind! Brethren of the church, why do not wicked men still oppose, and persecute, and hate you? Has the spirit of the world changed? No. Are sin and holiness less repugnant to each other now than in the primitive ages of the church? No. Has Satan lost any of his malignity, any of his cunning, any of his activity against the truth? No. Why then do these two great parties keep up so little agitation? I answer, *the lines are drawn too faintly between them.* The church is too much like the world in its spirit—its maxims—its general bearing. There is not holiness enough in the church; not zeal enough to evoke opposition. It was not thus at the beginning. Hence said the Saviour: "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." And as certainly as the church shall shake herself from the dust and gird herself for the combat in good earnest with the world, the flesh and the devil, will this hatred be again revealed. There is to be yet a great conflict on the earth between the powers of darkness and of light.

III. It is true, however, that defective as is christian deportment, and low as is the standard of excellence in the church, there is still a visible and palpable difference in conduct between the great mass of the godly and of the ungodly. Take human nature as it is, and the belief of the leading truths of the Bible—the public profession of those truths and the social and solemn acts of worship incident to

such a profession, cannot fail to restrain human passions, and to elevate human character above its original level. If then individual cases of religious profession occur, without any amendment in behavior—if men are not made *substantially better* by their adhesion to christianity, no argument, however elaborate, no pretext, however plausible, can shield them from the charge of deliberate and studied hypocrisy. That the deportment of professing christians is more upright than that of others in general, is evinced from the fact, that when they commit any gross outrage, it occasions more surprise than when the same is done by men of the world. This shows not only the purity of the principles by which they profess to be governed, but the comparative unfrequency of the event which awakens surprise.

The great enterprises of benevolence by which the moral condition of the world is undergoing a progressive improvement, are guided and sustained by men of devoted piety. The decisions of the last day will be justified by citing the history of the parties judged: "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." Who are building churches and traversing the waste places of the earth to preach the gospel? Who are translating, and printing, and circulating the Bible in all the languages and nations of the globe? Who are teaching the thousands and tens of thousands of children in Sunday schools the elements of sacred wisdom, and thus preparing the next generation for the responsible duties of life? Who are composing and publishing the evangelical books; the religious periodicals and tracts, that enlighten the popular mind and keep alive the public conscience? Whose example is giving tone to general morals and staying the tide of profligacy and corruption that prosperity has occasioned? I answer, the people of God. Ye are the salt of the earth; ye are the light of the world, said Jesus, and unless the world is the better for your living in it—unless ye are doing something for the cause of humanity, it is evident that ye are destitute of the salt of grace and the light of life.

Turn your attention now to the prevailing habits of wicked men. They "do evil with both hands earnestly." The prophet's description is every where and in every age

verified: "They draw iniquity with chords of vanity and sin as it were with a cart rope." See that inebriate drowning his reason in strong drink—brutalizing himself by the most loathsome excess. See that voluptuary finding his only happiness in gratifying the mere animal propensities of his nature. See that worshiper of mammon circumventing by every artifice the unwary and the defenceless to augment his own wealth. Hear the horrid oaths and blasphemies that are uttered by ten thousand mouths every day in our land. Behold that giddy, thoughtless throng, that are whirling in the vortex of amusement and eddying their way down to the gulf of perdition. These are the sins of nominally *christian countries*. And did God make all these creatures? Did he endow them with capacities to know, and love, and obey Him? Has Jesus died to save them, and is the Bible open to instruct them? Is heaven stooping to win their affections, and hell from beneath yawning to swallow them up? And do they *know* all these things? Are these momentous truths again and again pressed on their attention? Yes, all this is so; and still they are as indifferent as if God were a waxen image, and heaven and hell, judgment and eternity, were nursery tales.

IV. The Bible is full of evidence that the destinies of men in the future state will be as *different* as are their characters in the present. The very terms "government," "law," "righteousness," "judgment," "conscience," scattered over its pages, indicate the probationary state of man here and his consequent happiness or misery hereafter. It is the unvarying law of our nature, that no society or employment can minister to our pleasure unless we have tastes adapted to it. If, then, a wicked man, with all his enmity to God, and holiness, and all his aversion to the spiritual worship of heaven, could be admitted there, it would be morally impossible for him to enjoy its felicity. How could he join the song of praise to the Redeemer without having ever been cleansed by his blood? How could he wave the palm of victory, having never entered into the war, and never fought the battle against *sin*? How could he relish the pure and spiritual food of that land, in all its variety and abundance, when the meagre foretastes of it in this world had often excited his disgust? If, then, the Bible were silent, we might be confident that no man could be re-

ceived into heaven without the pardon of his sins and a thorough renovation of his heart. But the Bible is not silent—"Unless ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." He that believeth not shall be damned. Upon the wicked God will rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup. All liars and all swearers, all thieves and adulterers, all murderers and drunkards, along with the rejecters of Christ, will be shut out from heaven and will be thrust into the prison-house of hell. But the ransomed of the Lord will return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. They will obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing will flee away. They will drink of the pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.'

Let every man decide at once to which class he belongs. There is no neutral ground. He is either a child of God or a child of the devil—an heir of heaven or an heir of hell. He either loves or hates Jesus Christ. If the latter, let him rouse up from his astonishing and fatal stupidity and put forth efforts—*earnest, agonizing efforts*—to save his soul. If your life were in danger, would you be at ease? But your immortal life is in jeopardy. If your estate were likely to be lost, would you use no precaution? But your eternal inheritance is likely to be lost. If a single bone, or muscle, or nerve of your body were suffering acute pain, would you not try every remedy, and call to your aid the greatest skill? But God is able to punish, with unutterable anguish, your soul and body in hell forever. Oh! then awake to the importance of fleeing from the wrath to come. The salvation of your souls is the *the first, the great, the only true interest*. The riches, honors and pleasures of the world, are mere shadows flitting around you. From their silent graves the unnumbered dead, could they speak, would tell you what an *empty bubble the world is*. From the dark world of woe, the lost spirits, could they speak, would warn you not to *trifle with your eternal interests*. From their

calm and blissful abodes, the blessed spirits of your departed friends, your fathers and mothers, and brothers and sisters, who have gone home to glory, could they speak, would tell you that *heaven is worth striving for*. Like the former generations of earth, you, too, borne onward by the resistless tide of time, will soon launch into the broad and shoreless ocean of eternity. The season of prayer, and penitence, and pardon, will soon be over with you. The calls of mercy will soon die away in the distance. The love of Jesus will presently cease to be offered as a motive to awaken your gratitude and to enkindle your desires. Now he points to his bloody agonies in the garden—to his crown of thorns—to the scourge—the nails—the cross—and says, "*All this, sinner, for you.*" And will you, can you, turn away in cold disdain and say, "*I can't give up my sins?*" "They are so sweet to my taste, so pleasant to my soul, that I can't give them up for the love of Jesus and the bliss of heaven." Then you will never enter into his kingdom. God have mercy upon you, and save you from so mad a decision and so terrible a destiny. Amen.

NOTE TO MR. RYLAND'S SERMON.

In no other particular, perhaps, do worldly men form a more inaccurate judgment, than in the difference between themselves and christians. Each man among them, if he does not think himself as good as any believer, thinks himself better than some one of them, and that thus, as a class, there is no difference. But the decision is wholly wrong. The judgment the world forms of the church, is what each individual forms of another, which is sometimes exaggerated, sometimes false, but always wrong. No wonder. How can it be otherwise? The blind cannot distinguish colors. What traveler can institute a faithful comparison between a country he has seen and one he has not seen? He judges of the one by observation, of the other by report. And possibly the prophet has allusion to this very fact in the passage before us: "Turn ye, therefore—be converted then," (in view of what I have just said,) "and you will see the difference between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not."

We have said that the judgment is sometimes false. This

charge is grave, but it is true: and the truth has its foundation in the acknowledged principles of human character. The worldly man is obliged to do one of two things—either he must judge unfavorably of the christian, or of himself. When of the former, whether he attaches his imputation to the man or to his religion, it is an alleviation of his own case. Many a man is made, or makes himself an infidel, by this very process. His pleasures and pursuits conflict with the gospel, and he does not choose to relinquish them. He must, therefore condemn either himself or religion. And he attacks religion obliquely through its professors. Here is a double, tripple, injustice. First, he is partial, and then unfaithful to himself, at his highest cost. Secondly, he identifies the individual with his profession. And thirdly, he treats imaginary as real faults, and then, perhaps, propagates them. Hence, much of the slander the world throws at the church.

Sometimes the judgment is an exaggeration. Christianity in its perfection is an assemblage of all virtues. It proposes to make benefactors of thieves. "Let him that stole, steal no more, but rather let him labor with his hands, working that which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." But there is no christian perfect. His system is perfect; and he is aiming at perfection. It can be no argument against a pattern that it is perfect. This is its highest recommendation; yet worldlings do thus argue, when they say, "Why give us an inimitable model?" The industrious worldling, who, perhaps, has industry for his only good quality, compares himself with a lazy christian, in whom laziness is the greatest fault, and he finds himself the superior. He jumps first at the conclusion that he is as good as his neighbor; and then at the other conclusion, that worldliness is as good as religion. Or if you invert the order of this supposition, the judgment is the same as regards the parties condemned or acquitted. The lazy worldling accuses the industrious christian with being as much in love with the world as himself, and even more, because he very properly makes his worldly pursuits a part of his religion, and prosecutes them with as much earnestness as he prays or reads the Bible. In either case, and in all cases, religion suffers in the judgment of the world from the sheer unfaithfulness or incompetence of the judges.

And the worldly man is all the time utterly unconscious that he is himself partly the cause of the very imperfections of which he so loudly complains. Every man on earth, who does not submit to the authority of Jesus Christ, is throwing the whole weight of his influence against that cause which his love of his own pleasures and pursuits induces him to implead. This is as inevitable as is the passage of the electric spark from the positive to the negative side, thus producing equilibrium. The one effect is as sure in morals as the other is in physics. The church, by its contact with the world, confers great benefits upon it: but it must of necessity receive injury. Hence, every worldly man is partly the cause of the imperfection of every christian.

This sermon contains a valuable body of thought wisely arranged and well expressed, touching the difference in question, and thus offers a real service to all who read it. But especially does it commend itself to the unconverted portion of our readers. The error they commit in the judgment they form is injurious to the cause of religion. With the christian himself, it is a small matter to be judged of man's judgment, if he can but obtain the approbation of the Judge of all. But the injury to the man of the world himself is fatal—is deplorable. As a labor of love calculated to reverse the judgment referred to, we welcome to our pages this discourse, and commend it to all who read.

ED.

RELIGION, MORAL; NOT INTELLECTUAL:

A short Sermon, by the Editor.

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."—JOHN vii: 17.

The value of religion, to those to whom it is addressed, depends not upon the intellectual state or acts of the mind, but upon the moral. This is the proposition to be discussed and applied in this discourse: and it is one that merits your profoundest attention.

I make two preliminary remarks; of which also, you will see the great importance.

1. You must not confound the intrinsic value of religion, or religion itself, with its relative value, or actual advantage, to those to whom it addresses itself. Our religion is con-

tained in the gospel—and this is the same glorious system of truth, whatever may be its fate, when it claims mortal regards. Were all men to whom the glad tidings ever come to reject them, and persist to the end in rejecting them, and finally perish, it would no more diminish the grace, wisdom, and glory of the system itself, than accidental or voluntary blindness of men would obscure the light of the sun.

2. You must be at some trouble to distinguish between what is intellectual and what is moral, whether in states of the mind, or in its acts. Simply to admit, or to deny, any fact or proposition, according as supported by real or supposed evidence or not, has no morality in it. It is an intellectual act, and requires approbation or disapprobation, to include blame or praise. To decide that a debt is due, is an intellectual act. To *purpose* to pay it, and to *pay* it, are moral acts that deserve approbation; to determine *not* to pay it, or *carelessly* to *neglect* it, is a blame-worthy moral act. If these remarks are just, there is no more virtue in simply believing that Jesus is the Christ, *if that belief be separated from the disposition of the heart with which his person and character are contemplated*, than there is in believing in the rotundity of the earth, or in the laws of gravitation. The faith the gospel requires, *works by love*.

The doctrine of our text is a key which serves to unlock many mysteries.

1. It accounts for the origin and increase of idolatry in the world. From the earliest ages, the true God revealed himself to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses—all the faithful. And you may investigate the history of idolatry as much as you choose, and you will not find any better account of it, than that which the apostle Paul gives in his epistle to the Romans: "When they knew God, they (the gentiles,) glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools; and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things."—Rom. i: 21.

2. It accounts for the rejection of the Messiah by the Jewish nation. It was not that the Jews had not the requisite knowledge, nor that they did not examine the records they possessed; but it was because their knowledge

was nullified by the bad state of their hearts. "Ye search the scriptures," said our Lord to them, "because in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. But ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life." The critics have said, and very properly said, that "search" is a declaration in this place, not a command; and that "ye will not come," is not expressive of a mere futurity, but of a purpose. "Ye are not willing to come." "Ye decide not to come."

3. It reconciles the moral government of God with the known and admitted powers of the human mind. If this doctrine were not true, virtue and goodness might consist in mental power and acquisition; and if so, why not in bodily shape and agility? Animals might, then, be as moral as men. The grand characteristic of man is, that he is a moral being. To make an argument, and to understand it when made, is compatible with inveterate unholiness of heart. Hence, God claims the affections, the confidence, the homage of his creatures. And the moral sense is universal in man: it is the grand essential attribute of his nature, without which he is not man.

Where would be the wisdom, goodness, or justice of God, in either rewarding or punishing creatures, except as *good* or *bad*?

4. It explains many things in scripture, otherwise inexplicable. It shows in what sense repentance precedes faith. Both imply the same state of heart: but one has for its object God, and the other Christ. "Ye repented not afterwards, that ye might believe." "If thou hadst known, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace," is a charge of voluntary ignorance, antithetic to the extenuation, "I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief."

5. It is confirmed by the whole history of error and infidelity, in all ages. Error of all sorts, and of every degree, grows out of reading the scriptures with a bad heart. Pride conceals its own depravity. The soul unconscious of hell-desert, desires no atonement; charges God with injustice in the eternal punishment of the wicked; and sees no use in the preternatural influence of the Holy Spirit in order to conversion. A system of theology which does not make the atonement to religion, what the sun is to the planetary system, is not that gospel which Paul preached. Unitarian-

ism and Universalism, are worse than Mahomedanism or Idolatry: inasmuch as they suppose greater and better light. I would sooner be a Buddhist in China, than an unbeliever in Virginia.

Infidelity, in all its shapes, operates and matures in *the heart*. The man whose heart is right, needs no argument or miracle, to convince him that the gospel is true and adapted to his case. Why reason to prove from the history of the sun, its fitness to give light? The blinded man is sightless, despite of all logic: and unbelievers are voluntarily blind. Food to the taste, air to the lungs, water to thirst, is not more fit than the gospel to the honest hearted sinner. Argument changes no heart. Chalmers was admired for his astronomical discourses; but whom did they convert? And even Foster erred in supposing that a better pulpit style would secure the gospel a more favorable hearing among the learned. They admired the eloquence of Robert Hall, but they retained their opposition to the doctrines he preached. Milton, and Cowper, and Pollok, display genius they say, but it is one thing to admire their poetry, and another to love their theology.

INFERENCES.

This discussion shows us

1. The field of ministerial operation. The gospel ministry has to operate upon *hearts*. Were it merely to diffuse information, or convince judgments, our work were easy. But it is to attack and to conquer that strong castle, the human heart. Hence our dependence for success on God. Were it otherwise, effort would be sufficient and prayer unavailing. As it is, the humblest, obscurest, poorest, christian may labor for the conversion of the world, as really and as effectually as the loftiest, the most illustrious, the wealthiest on earth. It shows us
2. The reason why christians are imperfect. We are not *perfectly disposed to be perfect*. It shows us
3. The reason why unconverted men do not embrace the gospel. The heart is wrong.