DISCOURSE V.

ON THE SYMPATHY THAT IS FELT FOR MAN IN THE DISTANT PLACES OF CREATION.

"I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance."

LUKE xv. 7.

I have already attempted at full length to establish the position, that the infidel argument of astronomers goes to expunge a natural perfection from the character of God, even that wondrous property of his, by which he, at the same instant of time, can bend a close and a careful attention on a countless diversity of objects, and diffuse the intimacy of his power and of his presence, from the greatest to the minutest and most insignificant of them all. I also adverted shortly to this other circumstance,
that it went to impair a moral attribute of the Deity. It goes to impair the benevolence of his nature. It is saying much for the benevolence of God, to say, that a single world, or a single system, is not enough for it—that it must have the spread of a mightier region, on which it may pour forth a tide of exuberancy throughout all its provinces—that as far as our vision can carry us, it has strewed immensity with the floating receptacles of life, and has stretched over each of them the garniture of such a sky as mantles our own habitation—and that even from distances which are far beyond the reach of human eye, the songs of gratitude and praise may now be arising to the one God, who sits surrounded by the regards of his one great and universal family.

Now it is saying much for the benevolence of God, to say that it sends forth these wide and distant emanations over the surface of a territory so ample, that the world we inhabit, lying imbedded as it does, amidst so much surrounding greatness, shrinks into a point that to the universal eye might appear to be almost imper-
ceptible. But does it not add to the power and to the perfection of this universal eye, that at the very moment it is taking a comprehensive survey of the vast, it can fasten a steady and undistracted attention on each minute and separate portion of it; that at the very moment it is looking at all worlds, it can look most pointedly and most intelligently to each of them; that at the very moment it sweeps the field of immensity, it can settle all the earnestness of its regards upon every distinct handbreadth of that field; that at the very moment at which it embraces the totality of existence, it can send a most thorough and penetrating inspection into each of its details, and into every one of its endless diversities? You cannot fail to perceive how much this adds to the power of the all-seeing eye. Tell me then, if it do not add as much perfection to the benevolence of God, that while it is expatiating over the vast field of created things, there is not one portion of the field overlooked by it; that while it scatters blessings over the whole of an infinite range, it causes them to descend in a shower of plenty on every separate habitation; that while his
arm is underneath and round about all worlds, he enters within the precincts of every one of them, and gives a care and a tenderness to each individual of their teeming population. Oh! does not the God, who is said to be love, shed over this attribute of his, its finest illustration! when while he sits in the highest heaven, and pours out his fulness on the whole subordinate domain of nature and of providence, he bows a pitying regard on the very humblest of his children, and sends his reviving Spirit into every heart, and cheers by his presence every home, and provides for the wants of every family, and watches every sick-bed, and listens to the complaints of every sufferer; and while by his wondrous mind the weight of universal government is borne, oh! is it not more wondrous and more excellent still, that he feels for every sorrow, and has an ear open to every prayer.

"It doth not yet appear what we shall be," says the apostle John, "but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." It is the present lot of the angels, that they behold the face of our
Father in heaven, and it would seem as if the effect of this was to form and to perpetuate in them the moral likeness of himself, and that they reflect back upon him his own image, and that thus a diffused resemblance to the Godhead, is kept up amongst all those adoring worshippers who live in the near and rejoicing contemplation of the Godhead. Mark then how that peculiar and endearing feature in the goodness of the Deity, which we have just now adverted to—mark how beauteously it is reflected downwards upon us in the revealed attitude of angels. From the high eminences of heaven, are they bending a wakeful regard over the men of this sinful world; and the repentance of every one of them spreads a joy and a high gratulation throughout all its dwelling places. Put this trait of the angelic character into contrast with the dark and louring spirit of an infidel. He is told of the multitude of other worlds, and he feels a kindling magnificence in the conception, and he is seduced by an elevation which he cannot carry, and from this airy summit does he look down on the insignificance of the world we occupy, and pronounces it to be unworthy of
those visits and of those attentions which we read of in the New Testament. He is unable to wing his upward way along the scale, either of moral or of natural perfection; and when the wonderful extent of the field is made known to him, over which the wealth of the Divinity is lavished—there he stops, and wilders, and altogether misses this essential perception, that the power and perfection of the Divinity are not more displayed by the mere magnitude of the field, than they are by that minute and exquisite filling up, which leaves not its smallest portions neglected; but which imprints the fulness of the Godhead upon every one of them; and proves, by every flower of the pathless desert, as well as by every orb of immensity, how this unsearchable Being can care for all, and provide for all, and throned in mystery too high for us, can, throughout every instant of time, keep his attentive eye on every separate thing that he has formed, and by an act of his thoughtful and presiding intelligence, can constantly embrace all.

But God, compassed about as he is with
light inaccessible, and full of glory; lies so hidden from the ken and conception of all our faculties, that the spirit of man sinks exhausted by its attempts to comprehend him. Could the image of the supreme be placed direct before the eye of the mind, that flood of splendour, which is ever issuing from him on all who have the privilege of beholding, would not only dazzle, but overpower us. And, therefore it is, that I bid you look to the reflection of that image, and thus to take a view of its mitigated glories, and to gather the lineaments of the Godhead in the face of those righteous angels, who have never thrown away from them the resemblance in which they were created; and, unable as you are to support the grace and the majesty of that countenance, before which the seers and the prophets of other days fell, and became as dead men, let us, before we bring this argument to a close, borrow one lesson of him who sitteth on the throne, from the aspect and the revealed doings of those who are surrounding it.

The infidel, then, as he widens the field of his
contemplations, would suffer its every separate object to die away into forgetfulness: these angels, expatiating as they do, over the range of a loftier universality, are represented as all awake to the history of each of its distinct and subordinate provinces. The infidel, with his mind afloat among suns and among systems, can find no place in his already occupied regards, for that humble planet which lodges and accommodates our species: the angels, standing on a loftier summit, and with a mightier prospect of creation before them, are yet represented as looking down on this single world, and attentively marking the every feeling and the every demand of all its families. The infidel, by sinking us down to an unnoticeable minuteness, would lose sight of our dwelling-place altogether, and spread a darkening shroud of oblivion over all the concerns and all the interests of men: but the angels will not so abandon us; and undazzled by the whole surpassing grandeur of that scenery which is around them, are they revealed as directing all the fullness of their regard to this our habitation, and casting a longing and a benignant eye on our-
selves and on our children. The infidel will tell us of those worlds which roll afar, and the number of which outstrips the arithmetic of the human understanding—and then with the hardness of an unfeeling calculation, will he consign the one we occupy, with all its guilty generations, to despair. But he who counts the number of the stars, is set forth to us as looking at every inhabitant among the millions of our species, and by the word of the Gospel beckoning to him with the hand of invitation, and on the very first step of his return, as moving towards him with all the eagerness of the prodigal’s father, to receive him back again into that presence from which he had wandered. And as to this world, in favour of which the scowling infidel will not permit one solitary movement, all heaven is represented as in a stir about its restoration; and their cannot a single son, or a single daughter, be recalled from sin unto righteousness, without an acclamation of joy amongst the hosts of Paradise. Aye, and I can say it of the humblest and the unworthiest of you all, that the eye of angels is upon him, and that his repentance would, at
this moment, send forth a wave of delighted sensibility throughout the mighty throng of their innumerable legions.

Now, the single question I have to ask, is, On which of the two sides of this contrast do we see most of the impress of heaven? Which of the two would be most glorifying to God? Which of them carries upon it most of that evidence which lies in its having a celestial character? For if it be the side of the infidel, then must all our hopes expire with the ratifying of that fatal sentence, by which the world is doomed, through its insignificancy, to perpetual exclusion from the attentions of the Godhead. I have long been knocking at the door of your understanding, and have tried to find an admittance to it for many an argument. I now make my appeal to the sensibilities of your heart; and tell me to whom does the moral feeling within it yield its readiest testimony—to the infidel, who would make this world of ours vanish away into abandonment—or to those angels, who ring throughout all their mansions
the hosannas of joy, over every one individual of its repentant population?

And here I cannot omit to take advantage of that opening with which the Saviour has furnished us, by the parables of this chapter, and admits us into a familiar view of that principle on which the inhabitants of heaven are so awake to the deliverance and the restoration of our species. To illustrate the difference in the reach of knowledge and of affection, between a man and an angel, let us think of the difference of reach between one man and another. You may often witness a man, who feels neither tenderness nor care beyond the precincts of his own family; but who, on the strength of those instinctive fondnesses which nature has implanted in his bosom, may earn the character of an amiable father, or a kind husband, or a bright example of all that is soft and endearing in the relations of domestic society. Now conceive him, in addition to all this, to carry his affections abroad; without, at the same time, any abatement of their intensity towards the
objects which are at home—that stepping across the limits of the house he occupies, he takes an interest in the families which are near him—that he lends his services to the town or the district wherein he is placed, and gives up a portion of his time to the thoughtful labours of a humane and public-spirited citizen. By this enlargement in the sphere of his attention, he has extended his reach; and, provided he has not done so at the expense of that regard which is due to his family, a thing which, cramped and confined as we are, we are very apt, in the exercise of our humble faculties, to do—I put it to you, whether by extending the reach of his views and his affections, he has not extended his worth and his moral respectability along with it?

But I can conceive a still farther enlargement. I can figure to myself a man, whose wakeful sympathy overflows the field of his own immediate neighbourhood—to whom the name of country comes with all the omnipotence of a charm upon his heart, and with all the urgency of a most righteous and resistless claim upon
his services—who never hears the name of Britain sounded in his ears, but it stirs up all his enthusiasm in behalf of the worth and the welfare of its people—who gives himself up, with all the devotedness of a passion, to the best and the purest objects of patriotism—and who, spurning away from him the vulgarities of party ambition, separates his life and his labours to the fine pursuit of augmenting the science, or the virtue, or the substantial prosperity of his nation. Oh! could such a man retain all the tenderness, and fulfil all the duties which home and which neighbourhood require of him, and at the same time, expatiate in the might of his untired faculties, on so wide a field of benevolent contemplation—would not this extension of reach place him still higher than before, on the scale both of moral and intellectual gradation, and give him a still brighter and more enduring name in the records of human excellence?

And, lastly, I can conceive a still loftier flight of humanity—a man, the aspiring of whose heart for the good of man, knows no
limitations—whose longings, and whose conceptions on this subject, overlap all the barriers of geography—who, looking on himself as a brother of the species, links every spare energy which belongs to him, with the cause of its amelioration—who can embrace within the grasp of his ample desires, the whole family of mankind—and who, in obedience to a heaven-born movement of principle within him, separates himself to some big and busy enterprise, which is to tell on the moral destinies of the world. Oh! could such a man mix up the softenings of private virtue, with the habit of so sublime a comprehension—if, amid those magnificent darings of thought and of performance, the mildness of his benignant eye could still continue to cheer the retreat of his family, and to spread the charm and the sacredness of piety among all its members—could he even mingle himself in all the gentleness of a soothed and a smiling heart, with the playfulness of his children—and also find strength to shed the blessings of his presence and his counsel over the vicinity around him;—oh! would not the combination of so much grace with so much loftiness, only
serve the more to aggrandize him? Would not the one ingredient of a character so rare, go to illustrate and to magnify the other? And would not you pronounce him to be the fairest specimen of our nature, who could so call out all your tenderness, while he challenged and compelled all your veneration?

Nor can I proceed, at this point of my argument, without advertting to the way in which this last and this largest style of benevolence is exemplified in our own country—where the spirit of the Gospel has given to many of its enlightened disciples, the impulse of such a philanthropy, as carries abroad their wishes and their endeavours to the very outskirts of human population—a philanthropy, of which, if you asked the extent or the boundary of its field, we should answer in the language of inspiration, that the field is the world—a philanthropy, which overlooks all the distinctions of cast and of colour, and spreads its ample regards over the whole brotherhood of the species—a philanthropy, which attaches itself to man in the general; to man throughout all his varieties;
to man as the partaker of one common nature, and who, in whatever clime or latitude you may meet with him, is found to breathe the same sympathies, and to possess the same high capabilities both of bliss and of improvement. It is true, that, upon this subject, there is often a loose and unsettled magnificence of thought, which is fruitful of nothing but empty speculation. But the men to whom I allude, have not imaged the enterprise in the form of a thing unknown. They have given it a local habitation. They have bodied it forth in deed and in accomplishment. They have turned the dream into a reality. In them, the power of a lofty generalization meets with its happiest attemperment, in the principle and perseverance, and all the chastening and subduing virtues of the New Testament. And, were I in search of that fine union of grace and of greatness which I have now been insisting on, and, in virtue of which, the enlightened Christian can at once find room in his bosom for the concerns of universal humanity, and for the play of kindliness towards every individual he meets with—I could no where more readily
expect to find it, than with the worthies of our own land—the Howard of a former generation, who paced over Europe in quest of the unseen wretchedness which abounds in it—or in such men of our present generation, as Wilberforce, who lifted his unwearyed voice against the biggest outrage ever practised on our nature, till he wrought its extermination—and Clarkson, who plied his assiduous task at rearing the materials of its impressive history, and, at length carried, for this righteous cause, the mind of Parliament—and Carey, from whose hand the generations of the East are now receiving the elements of their moral renovation—and, in fine, those holy and devoted men, who count not their lives dear unto them; but, going forth every year from the island of our habitation, carry the message of heaven over the face of the world; and, in the front of severest obloquy, are now labouring in remotest lands; and are reclaiming another and another portion from the wastes of dark and fallen humanity; and are widening the domains of gospel light and gospel principle amongst them; and are spreading a moral beauty around the
every spot on which they pitch their lowly tabernacle; and are at length compelling even the eye and the testimony of gainsayers, by the success of their noble enterprise; and are forcing the exclamation of delighted surprise from the charmed and the arrested traveller, as he looks at the softening tints which they are now spreading over the wilderness, and as he hears the sound of the chapel bell, and as in those haunts where, at the distance of half a generation, savages would have scowled upon his path, he regales himself with the hum of missionary schools, and the lovely spectacle of peaceful and Christian villages.

Such, then, is the benevolence, at once so gentle and so lofty, of those men, who, sanctified by the faith that is in Jesus, have had their hearts visited from heaven by a beam of warmth and of sacredness. What, then, I should like to know, is the benevolence of the place from whence such an influence cometh? How wide is the compass of this virtue there, and how exquisite is the feeling of its tenderness, and how pure and how fervent are its aspirings
among those unfallen beings who have no darkness, and no encumbering weight of corruption to strive against? Angels have a mightier reach of contemplation. Angels can look upon this world and all which it inherits, as the part of a larger family. Angels were in the full exercise of their powers even at the first infancy of our species, and shared in the gratulations of that period, when at the birth of humanity all intelligent nature felt a gladdening impulse, and the morning stars sang together for joy. They loved us even with the love which a family on earth bears to a younger sister; and the very childhood of our tinier faculties did only serve the more to endear us to them; and though born at a later hour in the history of creation, did they regard us as heirs of the same destiny with themselves, to rise along with them in the scale of moral elevation, to bow at the same footstool, and to partake in those high dispensations of a parent's kindness and a parent's care, which are ever emanating from the throne of the Eternal on all the members of a dutiful and affectionate family. Take the reach of an angel's mind, but, at the same
time, take the seraphic fervour of an angel's benevolence along with it; how, from the eminence on which he stands he may have an eye upon many worlds, and a remembrance upon the origin and the successive concerns of every one of them; how he may feel the full force of a most affecting relationship with the habitants of each, as the offspring of one common Father; and though it be both the effect and the evidence of our depravity, that we cannot sympathise with these pure and generous ardours of a celestial spirit; how it may consist with the lofty comprehension, and the ever-breathing love of an angel, that he can both shoot his benevolence abroad over a mighty expanse of planets and systems, and lavish a flood of tenderness on each individual of their teeming population.

Keep all this in view, and you cannot fail to perceive how the principle so finely and so copiously illustrated in this chapter, may be brought to meet the infidelity we have thus long been employed in combating. It was nature, and the experience of every bosom will affirm it—it was nature of the shepherd to leave
the ninety and nine of his flock forgotten and alone in the wilderness, and betaking himself to the mountains, to give all his labour and all his concern to the pursuit of one solitary wanderer. It was nature; and we are told in the passage before us, that it is such a portion of nature as belongs not merely to men, but to angels; when the woman, with her mind in a state of listlessness as to the nine pieces of silver that were in secure custody, turned the whole force of her anxiety to the one piece which she had lost, and for which she had to light a candle, and to sweep the house, and to search diligently until she found it. It was nature in her to rejoice more over that piece, than over all the rest of them, and to tell it abroad among friends and neighbours, that they might rejoice along with her—and sadly effaced as humanity is, in all her original lineaments, this is a part of our nature, the very movements of which are experienced in heaven, “where there is more joy over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance.” For any thing I know, every planet that rolls in the immensity around me, may be a land
of righteousness; and be a member of the household of God; and have her secure dwelling-place within that ample limit, which embraces his great and universal family. But I know at least of one wanderer; and how wofully she has strayed from peace and from purity; and how in dreary alienation from him who made her, she has bewildered herself amongst those many devious tracks, which have carried her afar from the path of immortality; and how sadly tarnished all those beauties and felicities are, which promised, on that morning of her existence when God looked on her, and saw that all was very good—which promised so richly to bless and to adorn her; and how in the eye of the whole unfallen creation she has renounced all this goodliness, and is fast departing away from them into guilt, and wretchedness, and shame. Oh! if there be any truth in this chapter, and any sweet or touching nature in the principle which runs throughout all its parables, let us cease to wonder, though they who surround the throne of love should be looking so intently towards us—or though, in the way by which they have singled us out,
all the other orbs of space should, for one short season, on the scale of eternity, appear to be forgotten—or though, for every step of her recovery, and for every individual who is rendered back again to the fold from which he was separated, another and another message of triumph should be made to circulate amongst the hosts of paradise—or though, lost as we are, and sunk in depravity as we are, all the sympathies of heaven should now be awake on the enterprise of him who has travailed, in the greatness of his strength, to seek and to save us.

And here I cannot but remark how fine a harmony there is between the law of sympathetic nature in heaven, and the most touching exhibitions of it on the face of our world. When one of a numerous household droops under the power of disease, is not that the one to whom all the tenderness is turned, and who, in a manner, monopolises the inquiries of his neighbourhood, and the care of his family? When the sighing of the midnight storm sends a dismal foreboding into the mother's heart, to whom of all her offspring, I would ask, are her thoughts and her
anxieties then wandering? Is it not to her sailor boy whom her fancy has placed amid the rude and angry surges of the ocean? Does not this, the hour of his apprehended danger, concentrate upon him the whole force of her wakeful meditations? And does not he engross, for a season, her every sensibility, and her every prayer? We sometimes hear of shipwrecked passengers thrown upon a barbarous shore; and seized upon by its prowling inhabitants; and hurried away through the tracks of a dreary and unknown wilderness; and sold into captivity; and loaded with the fetters of irrecoverable bondage; and who stripped of every other liberty but the liberty of thought, feel even this to be another ingredient of wretchedness, for what can they think of but home, and as all its kind and tender imagery comes upon their remembrance, how can they think of it but in the bitterness of despair? Oh tell me when the fame of all this disaster reaches his family, who is the member of it to whom is directed the full tide of its griefs and of its sympathies? Who is it that, for weeks and for months, usurps their every feeling, and calls out their largest sacrifices, and sets them to the
busiest expedients for getting him back again? Who is it that makes them forgetful of themselves and of all around them; and tell me if you can assign a limit to the pains, and the exertions, and the surrenders which afflicted parents and weeping sisters would make to seek and to save him?

Now conceive, as we are warranted to do by the parables of this chapter, the principle of all these earthly exhibitions to be in full operation around the throne of God. Conceive the universe to be one secure and rejoicing family, and that this alienated world is the only strayed, or only captive member belonging to it; and we shall cease to wonder, that from the first period of the captivity of our species, down to the consummation of their history in time, there should be such a movement in heaven; or that angels should so often have sped their commissioned way on the errand of our recovery; or that the Son of God should have bowed himself down to the burden of our mysterious atonement; or that the Spirit of God should now, by the busy variety of his all-powerful influences,
be carrying forward that dispensation of grace which is to make us meet for re-admittance into the mansions of the celestial. Only think of love as the reigning principle there; of love, as sending forth its energies and aspirations to the quarter where its object is most in danger of being for ever lost to it; of love, as called forth by this single circumstance to its uttermost exertion, and the most exquisite feeling of its tenderness; and then shall we come to a distinct and familiar explanation of this whole mystery: Nor shall we resist by our incredulity, the gospel message any longer, though it tells us, that throughout the whole of this world’s history, long in our eyes, but only a little month in the high periods of immortality, so much of the vigilance, and so much of the earnestness of heaven, should have been expended on the recovery of its guilty population.

There is another touching trait of nature, which goes finely to heighten this principle, and still more forcibly to demonstrate its application to our present argument. So long as the dying child of David was alive, he was kept on
the stretch of anxiety and of suffering with regard to it. When it expired, he arose and comforted himself. This narrative of King David is in harmony with all that we experience of our own movements and our own sensibilities. It is the power of uncertainty which gives them so active and so interesting a play in our bosoms; and which heightens all our regards to a tenfold pitch of feeling and of exercise; and which fixes down our watchfulness upon our infant's dying bed; and which keeps us so painfully alive to every turn and to every symptom in the progress of its malady; and which draws out all our affections for it to a degree of intensity that is quite unutterable; and which urges us on to ply our every effort and our every expedient, till hope withdraw its lingering beam, or till death shut the eyes of our beloved in the slumber of its long and its last repose.

I know not who of you have your names written in the book of life—nor can I tell if this be known to the angels which are in heaven. While in the land of living men, you are under the power and application of a remedy, which
if taken as the Gospel prescribes, will renovate the soul, and altogether prepare it for the bloom and the vigour of immortality. Wonder not then that with this principle of uncertainty in such full operation, ministers should feel for you; or angels should feel for you; or all the sensibilities of heaven should be awake upon the symptoms of your grace and reformation; or the eyes of those who stand upon the high eminences of the celestial world, should be so earnestly fixed on the every footstep and new evolution of your moral history. Such a consideration as this should do something more than silence the infidel objection. It should give a practical effect to the calls of repentance. How will it go to aggravate the whole guilt of our impenitency, should we stand out against the power and the tenderness of these manifold applications—the voice of a beseeching God upon us—the word of salvation at our very door—the free offer of strength and of acceptance sounded in our hearing—the Spirit in readiness with his agency to meet our every desire and our every inquiry—angels beckon-
ing us to their company—and the very first
movements of our awakened conscience, draw-
ing upon us all their regards and all their ear-
nestness.
DISCOURSE VI.

ON THE CONTEST FOR AN ASCENDENCY OVER MAN, AMONGST THE HIGHER ORDERS OF INTELLIGENCE.

"And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it."

Col. ii. 15.

Though these Discourses be now drawing to a close, it is not because I feel that much more might not be said on the subject of them, both in the way of argument and of illustration. The whole of the Infidel difficulty proceeds upon the assumption, that the exclusive bearing of Christianity is upon the people of our earth; that this solitary planet is in no way implicated with the concerns of a wider dispensation; that the revelation we have of the dealings of God, in this district of his empire, does not suit and subordinate itself to a
system of moral administration, as extended as is the whole of his monarchy. Or, in other words, because Infidels have not access to the whole truth, will they refuse a part of it, however well attested or well accredited it may be; because a mantle of deep obscurity rests on the government of God, when taken in all its eternity and all its entirety, will they shut their eyes against that allowance of light which has been made to pass downwards upon our world from time to time, through so many partial unfoldings; and till they are made to know the share which other planets have in these communications of mercy, will they turn them away from the actual message which has come to their own door, and will neither examine its credentials, nor be alarmed by its warnings, nor be won by the tenderness of its invitations.

On that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, there will be found such a wilful duplicity and darkening of the mind in the whole of this proceeding, as shall bring down upon it the burden of a righteous condemnation. But, even now, does it lie open to
the rebuke of philosophy, when the soundness and the consistency of her principles are brought faithfully to bear upon it. Were the character of modern science rightly understood, it would be seen, that the very thing which gave such strength and sureness to all her conclusions, was that humility of spirit which belonged to her. She promulgates all that is positively known; but she maintains the strictest silence and modesty about all that is unknown. She thankfully accepts of evidence wherever it can be found; nor does she spurn away from her the very humblest contribution of such doctrine, as can be witnessed by human observation, or can be attested by human veracity. But with all this she can hold out most sternly against that power of eloquence and fancy, which often throws so bewitching a charm over the plausibilities of ingenious speculation. Truth is the alone object of her reverence; and did she at all times keep by her attachments, nor throw them away when theology submitted to her cognizance its demonstrations and its claims, we should not despair of witnessing as great a revolution in those prevailing habitudes of thought which ob-
tain throughout our literary establishments, on the subject of Christianity, as that which has actually taken place in the philosophy of external nature. This is the first field on which have been successfully practised the experimental lessons of Bacon; and they who are conversant with these matters, know how great and how general a uniformity of doctrine now prevails in the sciences of astronomy, and mechanics, and chemistry, and almost all the other departments in the history and philosophy of matter. But this uniformity stands strikingly contrasted with the diversity of our moral systems, with the restless fluctuations both of language and of sentiment which are taking place in the philosophy of mind, with the palpable fact, that every new course of instruction upon this subject, has some new articles, or some new explanations to peculiarise it: and all this is to be attributed, not to the progress of the science, not to a growing, but to an alternating movement, not to its perpetual additions, but to its perpetual vibrations.

I mean not to assert the futility of moral
science, or to deny her importance, or to insist on the utter hopelessness of her advancement. The Baconian method will not probably push forward her discoveries with such a rapidity, or to such an extent, as many of her sanguine disciples have anticipated. But if the spirit and the maxims of this philosophy were at all times proceeded upon, it would certainly check that rashness and variety of excogitation, in virtue of which it may almost be said, that every new course presents us with a new system, and that every new teacher has some singularity or other to characterise him. She may be able to make out an exact transcript of the phenomena of mind, and in so doing, she yields a most important contribution to the stock of human acquirements. But, when she attempts to grope her darkling way through the counsels of the Deity, and the futurities of his administration; when without one passing acknowledgment to the embassy which professes to have come from him, or to the facts and to the testimonies by which it has so illustriously been vindicated, she launches forth her own speculations on the character of God, and the destiny of man;
when though this be a subject on which neither the recollections of history, nor the ephemeral experience of any single life, can furnish one observation to enlighten her, she will nevertheless utter her own plausibilities, not merely with a contemptuous neglect of the Bible, but in direct opposition to it; then it is high time to remind her of the difference between the reverie of him who has not seen God, and the well-accredited declaration of him who was in the beginning with God, and was God; and to tell her, that this so far from being the argument of an ignoble fanaticism, is in harmony with the very argument upon which the science of experiment has been reared, and by which it has been at length delivered from the influence of theory, and purified of all its vain and visionary splendours.

In my last Discourses, I have attempted to collect from the records of God's actual communication to the world, such traces of relationship between other orders of being and the great family of mankind, as serve to prove that Christianity is not so paltry and provincial a
system as Infidelity presumes it to be. And as I said before, I have not exhausted all that may legitimately be derived upon this subject from the informations of Scripture. I have adverted, it is true, to the knowledge of our moral history which obtains throughout other provinces of the intelligent creation. I have asserted the universal importance which this may confer on the transactions even of one planet, in as much as it may spread an honourable display of the Godhead amongst all the mansions of infinity. I have attempted to expatiate on the argument, that an event little in itself, may be so pregnant with character, as to furnish all the worshippers of heaven with a theme of praise for eternity. I have stated that nothing is of magnitude in their eyes, but that which serves to endear to them the Father of their spirits, or to shed a lustre over the glory of his incomprehensible attributes—and that thus, from the redemption even of our solitary species, there may go forth such an exhibition of the Deity, as shall bear the triumphs of his name to the very outskirts of the universe.
I have farther adverted to another distinct Scriptural intimation, that the state of fallen man was not only matter of knowledge to other orders of creation, but was also matter of deep regret and affectionate sympathy; that agreeably to such laws of sympathy as are most familiar even to human observation, the very wretchedness of our condition was fitted to concentrate upon us the feelings, and the attentions, and the services, of the celestial—to single us out for a time to the gaze of their most earnest and unceasing contemplation—to draw forth all that was kind and all that was tender within them—and just in proportion to the need and to the helplessness of us miserable exiles from the family of God, to multiply upon us the regards, and call out in our behalf the fond and eager exertions of those who had never wandered away from him. This appears from the Bible to be the style of that benevolence which glows and which circulates around the throne of heaven. It is the very benevolence which emanates from the throne itself, and the attentions of which have for so many thousand years signalled the inhabitants of our
world. This may look a long period for so paltry a world. But how have Infidels come to their conception that our world is so paltry? By looking abroad over the countless systems of immensity. But why then have they missed the conception, that the time of those peculiar visitations, which they look upon as so disproportionate to the magnitude of this earth, is just as evanescent as the earth itself is insignificant? Why look they not abroad on the countless generations of eternity; and thus come back to the conclusion, that after all, the redemption of our species is but an ephemeral doing in the history of intelligent nature; that it leaves the Author of it room for all the accomplishments of a wise and equal administration; and not to mention, that even during the progress of it, it withdraws not a single thought or a single energy of his, from other fields of creation, that there remains time enough to him for carrying round the visitations of as striking and as peculiar a tenderness, over the whole extent of his great and universal monarchy?

It might serve still farther to incorporate the
concerns of our planet with the general history of moral and intelligent beings, to state, not merely the knowledge which they take of us, and not merely the compassionate anxiety which they feel for us; but to state the importance derived to our world from its being the actual theatre of a keen and ambitious contest amongst the upper orders of creation. You know that for the possession of a very small and insulated territory, the mightiest empires of the world, have put forth all their resources; and on some field of mustering competition, have monarchs met, and embarked for victory, all the pride of a country's talent, and all the flower and strength of a country's population. The solitary island around which so many fleets are hovering, and on the shores of which so many armed men are descending as to an arena of hostility, may well wonder at its own unlooked-for estimation. But other principles are animating the battle; and the glory of nations is at stake; and a much higher result is in the contemplation of each party, than the gain of so humble an acquirement as the primary object of the war; and honour, dearer to many a bosom
than existence, is now the interest on which so much blood and so much treasure is expended; and the stirring spirit of emulation has now got hold of the combatants; and thus, amid all the insignificance which attaches to the material origin of the contest, do both the eagerness and the extent of it, receive from the constitution of our nature, their most full and adequate explanation.

Now, if this be also the principle of higher natures—if, on the one hand, God be jealous of his honour, and on the other, there be proud and exalted spirits, who scowl defiance at him and at his monarchy—if, on the side of heaven, there be an angelic host rallying around the standard of loyalty, who flee with alacrity at the bidding of the Almighty, who are devoted to his glory, and feel a rejoicing interest in the evolution of his counsels; and if, on the side of hell, there be a sullen front of resistance, a hate and malice inextinguishable, an unquelled daring of revenge to baffle the wisdom of the Eternal, and to arrest the hand, and to defeat the purposes of Omnipotence—then let the material
prize of victory be insignificant as it may, it is the victory in itself which upholds the impulse of this keen and stimulated rivalry. If, by the sagacity of one infernal mind, a single planet has been seduced from its allegiance, and been brought under the ascendancy of him who is called in Scripture, "the god of this world," and if the errand on which our Redeemer came, was to destroy the works of the devil—then let this planet have all the littleness which astronomy has assigned to it—call it what it is, one of the smaller islets which float on the ocean of vacancy; 'it has become the theatre of such a competition, as may have all the desires and all the energies of a divided universe embarked upon it. It involves in it other objects than the single recovery of our species. It decides higher questions. It stands linked with the supremacy of God, and will at length demonstrate the way in which he inflicts chastisement and overthrow upon all his enemies. I know not if our rebellious world be the only stronghold which Satan is possessed of, or if it be but the single post of an extended warfare, that is now going on between the powers of light and
of darkness. But be it the one or the other, the parties are in array, and the spirit of the contest is in full energy, and the honour of mighty combatants is at stake; and let us therefore cease to wonder that our humble residence has been made the theatre of so busy an operation, or that the ambition of loftier natures has here put forth all its desire and all its strenuousness.

This unfolds to us another of those high and extensive bearings, which the moral history of our globe may have on the system of God's universal administration. Were an enemy to touch the shore of this high-minded country, and to occupy so much as one of the humblest of its villages, and there to seduce the natives from their loyalty, and to sit down along with them in entrenched defiance to all the threats, and to all the preparations of an insulted empire—oh! how would the cry of wounded pride resound throughout all the ranks and varieties of our mighty population, and this very movement of indignancy would reach the king upon his throne; and circulate among those who stood
in all the grandeur of chieftainship around him; and be heard to thrill in the eloquence of Parliament; and spread so resistless an appeal to a nation's honour, and a nation's patriotism, that the trumpet of war would summon to its call, all the spirit and all the willing energies of our kingdom; and rather than sit down in patient endurance under the burning disgrace of such a violation, would the whole of its strength and resources be embarked upon the contest; and never never would we let down our exertions and our sacrifices, till either our deluded countrymen were reclaimed, or till the whole of this offence, were, by one righteous act of vengeance, swept away altogether from the face of the territory it deformed.

The Bible is always most full and most explanatory on those points of revelation in which men are personally interested. But it does at times offer a dim transparency, through which may be caught a partial view of such designs and of such enterprises as are now afloat among the upper orders of intelligence. It tells us of a mighty struggle that is now going on for a
moral ascendancy over the hearts of this world's population. It tells us that our race were seduced from their allegiance to God, by the plotting sagacity of one who stands pre-eminent against him, among the hosts of a very wide and extended rebellion. It tells us of the Captain of Salvation, who undertook to spoil him of this triumph; and throughout the whole of that magnificent train of prophecy which points to him, does it describe the work he had to do, as a conflict, in which strength was to be put forth, and painful suffering to be endured, and fury to be poured upon enemies, and principalities to be dethroned, and all those toils, and dangers, and difficulties to be borne, which strewed the path of perseverance that was to carry him to victory.

But it is a contest of skill, as well as of strength and of influence. There is the earnest competition of angelic faculties embarked on this struggle for ascendancy. And while in the Bible there is recorded, (faintly and partially, we admit,) the deep and insidious policy that is practised on the one side; we are also told,
that on the plan of our world's restoration, there are lavished all the riches of an unsearchable wisdom, upon the other. It would appear, that for the accomplishment of his purpose, the great enemy of God and of man plied his every calculation; and brought all the devices of his deep and settled malignity to bear upon our species; and thought that could he involve us in sin, every attribute of the Divinity stood staked to the banishment of our race from beyond the limits of the empire of righteousness; and thus did he practise his invasions on the moral territory of the unfallen; and glorying in his success, did he fancy and feel that he had achieved a permanent separation between the God who sitteth in heaven, and one at least of the planetary mansions which he had reared.

The errand of the Saviour was to restore this sinful world, and have its people re-admitted within the circle of heaven's pure and righteous family. But in the government of heaven, as well as in the government of earth, there are certain principles which cannot be compromised; and certain maxims of administration
which must never be departed from; and a
certain character of majesty and of truth, on
which the taint even of the slightest violation
can never be permitted; and a certain authority
which must be upheld by the immutability of
all its sanctions, and the unerring fulfilment of
all its wise and righteous proclamations. All
this was in the mind of the archangel, and a
gleam of malignant joy shot athwart him, as he
conceived his project for hemming our unfor-
tunate species within the bound of an irrecover-
able dilemma; and as surely as sin and holiness
could not enter into fellowship, so surely did
he think, that if man were seduced to diso-
bedience, would the truth, and the justice, and
the immutability of God, lay their insurmount-
able barriers on the path of his future ac-
ceptance.

It was only in that plan of recovery of which
Jesus Christ was the author and the finisher,
that the great adversary of our species met with
a wisdom which overmatched him. It is true,
that he had reared, in the guilt to which he
seduced us, a mighty obstacle in the way of this
lofty undertaking. But when the grand expedient was announced, and the blood of that atonement, by which sinners are brought nigh, was willingly offered to be shed for us, and the eternal Son, to carry this mystery into accomplishment, assumed our nature—then was the prince of that mighty rebellion, in which the fate and the history of our world are so deeply implicated, in visible alarm for the safety of all his acquisitions: nor can the record of this wondrous history carry forward its narrative, without furnishing some transient glimpses of a sublime and a superior warfare, in which, for the prize of a spiritual dominion over our species, we may dimly perceive the contest of loftiest talent, and all the designs of heaven in behalf of man, met at every point of their evolution, by the counterworkings of a rival strength and a rival sagacity.

We there read of a struggle which the Captain of our salvation had to sustain, when the lustre of the Godhead lay obscured, and the strength of its omnipotence was mysteriously weighed down under the infirmities of our na-
ture—how Satan singled him out, and dared him to the combat of the wilderness—how all his wiles and all his influences were resisted—how he left our Saviour in all the triumphs of unsubdued loyalty—how the progress of this mighty achievement is marked by every character of a conflict—how many of the gospel miracles were so many direct infringements on the power and empire of a great spiritual rebellion—how in one precious season of gladness among the few which brightened the dark career of our Saviour's humiliation, he rejoiced in spirit, and gave as the cause of it to his disciples, that "he saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven"—how the momentary advantages that were gotten over him, are ascribed to the agency of this infernal being, who entered the heart of Judas, and tempted the disciple to betray his Master and his Friend. I know that I am treading on the confines of mystery. I cannot tell what the battle that he fought. I cannot compute the terror or the strength of his enemies. I cannot say, for I have not been told, how it was that they stood in marshalled and hideous array against him:—nor can I measure how great the
firm daring of his soul, when he tasted that cup in all its bitterness, which he prayed might pass away from him; when with the feeling that he was forsaken by his God, he trod the wine-press alone; when he entered single-handed upon that dreary period of agony, and insult, and death, in which, from the garden to the cross, he had to bear the burden of a world's atonement. I cannot speak in my own language, but I can say, in the language of the Bible, of the days and the nights of this great enterprise, that it was the season of the travail of his soul; that it was the hour and the power of darkness; that the work of our redemption, was a work accompanied by the effort, and the violence, and the fury of a combat; by all the arduousness of a battle in its progress, and all the glories of a victory in its termination: and after he called out that it was finished, after he was loosed from the prison-house of the grave, after he had ascended up on high, he is said to have made captivity captive; and to have spoiled principalities and powers; and to have seen his pleasure upon his enemies; and to have made a show of them openly.
I will not affect a wisdom above that which is written, by fancying such details of this warfare as the Bible has not laid before me. But surely it is no more than being wise up to that which is written, to assert that in achieving the redemption of our world, a warfare had to be accomplished; that upon this subject there was among the higher provinces of creation, the keen and the animated conflict of opposing interests; that the result of it involved something grander and more affecting, than even the fate of this world's population; that it decided a question of rivalship between the righteous and everlasting Monarch of universal being, and the prince of a great and widely extended rebellion, of which I neither know how vast is the magnitude, nor how important and diversified are the bearings: and thus do we gather from this consideration, another distinct argument, helping us to explain, why on the salvation of our solitary species so much attention appears to have been concentrated, and so much energy appears to have been expended.

But it would appear from the Records of In-
piration, that the contest is not yet ended; that on the one hand the Spirit of God is employed in making for the truths of Christianity, a way into the human heart, with all the power of an effectual demonstration; that on the other, there is a spirit now abroad, which worketh in the children of disobedience; that on the one hand, the Holy Ghost is calling men out of darkness into the marvellous light of the Gospel; and that on the other hand, he who is styled the god of this world, is blinding their hearts, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should enter into them; that they who are under the dominion of the one, are said to have overcome, because greater is he that is in them than he that is in the world; and that they who are under the dominion of the other, are said to be the children of the devil, and to be under his snare, and to be taken captive by him at his will. How these respective powers do operate, is one question. The fact of their operation, is another. We abstain from the former. We attach ourselves to the latter, and gather from it, that the prince of darkness still walketh abroad amongst us; that he is still
working his insidious policy, if not with the vigorous inspiration of hope, at least with the frantic energies of despair; that while the overtures of reconciliation are made to circulate through the world, he is plying all his devices to deafen and to extinguish the impression of them; or, in other words, while a process of invitation and of argument has emanated from heaven, for reclaiming men to their loyalty—the process is resisted at all its points, by one who is putting forth his every expedient, and wielding a mysterious ascendancy, to seduce and to enthrall them.

To an infidel ear, all this carries the sound of something wild and visionary along with it. But though only known through the medium of revelation; after it is known, who can fail to recognise its harmony with the great lineaments of human experience? Who has not felt the workings of a rivalry within him, between the power of conscience and the power of temptation? Who does not remember those seasons of retirement, when the calculations of eternity had gotten a momentary command over the
heart; and time, with all its interests and all its vexations, had dwindled into insignificance before them? And who does not remember, how upon his actual engagement with the objects of time, they resumed a control, as great and as omnipotent, as if all the importance of eternity adhered to them—how they emitted from them such an impression upon his feelings, as to fix and to fascinate the whole man into a subser-viency to their influence—how in spite of every lesson of their worthlessness, brought home to him at every turn by the rapidity of the seasons, and the vicissitudes of life, and the ever-moving progress of his own earthly career, and the visible ravages of death among his acquaintances around him, and the desolations of his family, and the constant breaking up of his system of friendships, and the affecting spectacle of all that lives and is in motion, withering and hastening to the grave;—oh! how comes it, that in the face of all this experience, the whole elevation of purpose, conceived in the hour of his better understanding, should be dissipated and forgotten? Whence the might, and whence the mystery of that spell, which so binds and so in-
fatuates us to the world? What prompts us so to embark the whole strength of our eagerness and of our desires, in pursuit of interests which we know a few little years will bring to utter annihilation? Who is it that imparts to them all the charm and all the colour of an unfailing durability? Who is it that throws such an air of stability over these earthly tabernacles, as makes them look to the fascinated eye of man, like resting-places for eternity? Who is it that so pictures out the objects of sense, and so magnifies the range of their future enjoyment, and so dazzles the fond and deceived imagination, that in looking onward through our earthly career, it appears like the vista, or the perspective, of innumerable ages? He who is called the god of this world. He who can dress the idleness of its waking dreams in the garb of reality. He who can pour a seducing brilliancy over the panorama of its fleeting pleasures and its vain anticipations. He who can turn it into an instrument of deceitfulness; and make it wield such an absolute ascendancy over all the affections, that man becomes the poor slave of its idolatries and its charms, puts the authority of
conscience, and the warnings of the Word of God, and the offered instigations of the Spirit of God, and all the lessons of calculation, and all the wisdom even of his own sound and sober experience, away from him.

But, this wondrous contest will come to a close. Some will return to their loyalty, and others will keep by their rebellion; and, in the day of the winding up of the drama of this world’s history, there will be made manifest to the myriads of the various orders of creation, both the mercy and vindicated majesty of the Eternal. Oh! on that day, how vain will this presumption of the Infidel astronomy appear, when the affairs of men come to be examined in the presence of an innumerable company; and beings of loftiest nature are seen to crowd around the judgment-seat; and the Saviour shall appear in our sky, with a celestial retinue, who have come with him from afar to witness all his doings, and to take a deep and solemn interest in all his dispensions; and the destiny of our species whom the Infidel would thus detach, in solitary insignificance, from the universe
altogether, shall be found to merge and to mingle with higher destinies—the good to spend their eternity with angels—the bad to spend their eternity with angels—the former to be re-admitted into the universal family of God's obedient worshippers—the latter to share in the everlasting pain and ignominy of the defeated hosts of the rebellious—the people of this planet to be implicated, throughout the whole train of their never-ending history, with the higher ranks, and the more extended tribes of intelligence: And thus it is, that the special administration we now live under, shall be seen to harmonise in its bearings, and to accord in its magnificence, with all that extent of nature and of her territories, which modern science has unfolded.