

his congregation. His sermons were characterized by great simplicity, and by unconventional, untheological style. Greater prominence was given to ethical principles than to doctrine. One of his congregation said, "His first object was to lead us to God, to withdraw the veil that is between our hearts and Him. Another records that the chief impression on his boyish mind was that of the reality given to things of religion.

In 1832, the career to which Emerson had looked forward so eagerly, and which he had entered but three years previously, was brought to a close. There had been a growing repugnance on his part to the use of the elements at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and the conviction as to his own duty in the matter became so clear, that he proposed to his congregation that the outward form be dispensed with, and the rite made merely one of commemoration. His proposal was referred to a committee, who expressed their entire confidence in him, but declined to advise any change. His son writes: "During the time while the question of his relations with the church was under the consideration of the committee, he went alone to the mountains to consider his duty. He very fairly stated to himself the other side of the question, how, for his aversion to a form in which he had been brought up, and which usage and association had endeared to many of the best of his flock, he was about to break the strong tie which bound him to his people, and enabled him, after painful years of preparation, to be a light and help and comfort to them. But to preserve this bond he must at the very altar, where all thought should be highest, and all action truest, do violence to his spiritual instincts and smother his convictions, and admit that form could outweigh spirit. Whether or not the lower considerations of a pleasant and settled sphere of usefulness presented themselves, this was

enough, and he came down from the mountain, having said, 'Get thee behind me, Satan,' to meet his people; explained very simply to them his belief that the Scriptural observance had not the claims of authority for *their* satisfaction, but frankly stating that his own objection was not of texts, but to witness against the rites in his own breast, and he resigned his charge." (Life, Edward Emerson.) This simple trusting to the "light within" when the path before seemed very dark, and every worldly consideration pointed in the opposite direction was richly blessed. Henceforth his parish was the broad world, and his harvest multiplied a thousand-fold.

Ian Maclaren has said, "It is excellent to say 'God of our fathers,' and to have one's piety linked to the past; but it is best to say 'my God,' and to possess a faith that is unassailable, because it has been won by our own hand, and is part of our own soul." The era in which Emerson was living was full of just such an endeavor on the part of many an earnest soul, and we who are reaping the fruits of this noble struggle can scarcely picture the many pitiful tragedies wrought in every religious denomination in almost every family. There were parents who saw in the death of a beloved child who had never entered the church communion, the beginning of a life of endless torment, and yet they forced their anguished hearts to say, "Thy will be done." There were bright young lives filled with a hunger and thirst after righteousness, but filled also with a conviction of the divine source of reason, who strove to reconcile these two great forces within them, but the churches of their fathers were resisting with all the resources at their command any attempt at modification of doctrine—and the result was a drifting away from all church affiliations to the company of the vicious, or what was almost as disastrous, an outward submission when the heart refused allegiance,