

merciful disposition better than hardness of heart. The benefits of an early culture of these moral sentiments are manifest from the same reasons that show the advantage of an early intellectual exercise. The habit of applying them is more readily acquired. The opposite passions are more easily corrected, and being kept in check by a watchfulness that views their first movements with suspicion, their force and activity are proportionably weakened. The whelp is more easily tamed than the fullgrown tiger; and malign passions are more readily and effectively overruled, when the proper remedies are applied upon the first indications that manifest their existence.

But the rule is one of still wider comprehensiveness, and is applicable, under all the ordinary conditions of society, to the religious improvement, as well as the intellectual and moral culture of mankind. It is true, that it is impossible by any course of previous discipline, by any human art, apart from and independent of that divine grace which is the special gift of the Almighty, to render man a religious being in the highest sense of the term, a new creature reconciled to its creator, and subjected to the kingdom of God; for the application of any system of means that are merely natural and entirely destitute of an auxiliary power that is superior to nature, must terminate in an effect that is natural only; whereas religion as limited by the above definition, supposes the production of a character, and its introduction into a state that is beyond the range of any natural causes, that is, a spiritual character, and a state, the subject of which is enabled by divine grace, freely imparted to him, not only to respect God as the great object of all his worship and obedience, but is judicially absolved by God from the penalty

to which sin had rendered him obnoxious. It is a character totally unattainable without such assistance, and a state in which no one may find himself placed but through the special grace and mercy of his Maker. This is evidently in accordance with the whole tenour of divine revelation. "By grace are ye saved, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." "No man can come unto me, except the father who hath sent me, draw him." But it is also true that there are certain things besides, which the attainment of that salvation unfolded by Christ and made possible to mankind, presupposes, and which, therefore, may be termed necessary to it. Before Christ can be received, it is at least necessary that his name should be made known to us. Before he can be received in all his offices, something must be known of the work which he has accomplished on our behalf. For any thing that the word of God declares, no one can be redeemed by the blood of Christ, who knows nothing of the atonement which he has made. These are necessary, requisites but there are other things, which though not absolutely necessary, are yet in the ordinary course of divine providence, and according to the usual method which, in the infinite wisdom of God, is adopted for the communications of his grace, the ordinary antecedents of the blessings of salvation. Though not to be understood as the forerunners of these blessings universally, they are yet to be considered and constantly employed as the common means of procuring them. The sun may go ten degrees back to remove the suspicions of a doubting Hezekiah, but the misgivings of others must be remedied by more ordinary means. In the same manner some may be violently impressed, as it were, into the kingdom of Heaven, by the rare