

live a true, a brave and a noble life, which shall be full of inward satisfaction, peace and hope to themselves, and attended with richest blessing for others.

3. It was necessary to point out that we may call these limitations by which we are contained in the formation of opinion. On the other hand, however, we must regard the possession of right opinions as, in our own case, a possibility. In other words, we must believe that God has given us reason, rational power, powers of thinking, and of thinking aright.

It is certainly a mistake to say that religion disparages reason. Religion says that reason could not discover certain truths unless they were revealed, and this is no more than to say that our eyes could not see certain objects unless they were set before them, or, that they could not see them in the dark. But this is not to disparage our eyes. When we say that a mill cannot produce flour unless corn is cast into it, we are not denying the goodness of the mill—its province is not to create but to grind. And the mind of man is the mill that grinds—the eye that sees.

It is the abuse of reason that the Bible condemns. The use of reason it everywhere acknowledges or takes for granted. It appeals to the reason and conscience of man on every side. Lacordaire remarks that "God has given reason to me to show us that he has no fear of reason;" and Vinet observes, with equal truth, that "if reason can do nothing, it cannot even prove that it cannot do nothing. If it proves that it can do nothing, then it has the power to prove something." And the same writer remarks: "Reason is not the efficient cause of the sentiments that are begotten within us; it can only bring us face to face with the facts, and enable them to speak to us."

A man is not a better Christian, or

a better anything, because he acts without reflection. The most thoughtful man is the best man, the most competent man. The Christian is told that he must be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in him; and if he would do so, he must beware of disparaging or neglecting our noblest attribute, that attribute without which religion would be inconceivable.

4. The next remark is at once the most obvious and the most important. In the formation of opinion, as in the acquisition of knowledge, we must have a supreme regard to truth. Truth must always be preferred; and neither prejudice nor our party possessions must be allowed to stand in the way. We must, of course, be aware that, in the absolute sense of the words, this is impossible. It might then seem useless to insist upon the principle as a duty, or even to mention it; but such an inference would be as erroneous as it is unreflecting. As well might we blot out of the Sermon on the Mount the Divine words, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect," because all men are sinful and imperfect. We know that we can rise above the poor, low level of our former selves only by keeping this glorious standard before our eyes. And so it is only by keeping before our minds the attainment of perfect truth as an object never to be abandoned, that we can ever escape from any of the falsehoods and confusions in which we are involved. We may well feel the difficulty of this enterprise. But we must not for that reason abandon it. We must resolve and endeavour to reach truth in our judgments and opinions, in spite of *prejudice*, in spite of *interest*, in spite of *party*. Let us look at these obstacles which lie in our way.

(1) *Prejudice*.—What does this mean? It means our preconceived notions, whether true or false. And