

solicitous to discharge them. Our responsibilities are born with us, and grow with us, and cannot die with us. They are not of our own choosing, but of God's ordaining, and can be neglected only to our unspeakable loss and sorrow. Ought we not, then, to cherish those religious forms which may remind us of them, and suggest essential motives and bestow needed aid in meeting and bearing them? The freedom which sets these forms aside, or holds them subject to momentary convenience or caprice, is indeed congenial to an indolent and sluggish mind. In a worldly point of view, it is comfortable to have our relation to Christianity so loose and indefinite, that we may obey the passing impulse, whatever it be, whether it bid us float on the current of superficial religious sentiment, or push us off into a broader license of speech and conduct than accords with Christian duty. But the all-important question is, How far is this freedom consistent with the actual growth of character? How will it be regarded in future years, from the bed of death, from the judgment-seat of Christ?

In treating of religious forms, I have not given the prominence which some might give to the power of our example over others; for I cannot admit that either writer or reader is so little in need of these forms, on his own account, as to be called upon to adopt them from purely disinterested and philanthropic motives. And where one performs the ritual of piety, or any part of it, in that patronising way and spirit which seem to say, "All this I do, not for my own sake, but for the sake of others, who need it more," there is so much heartlessness in the service as to repel and disgust those whom it is designed to draw. I place as high an estimate as any one on the