

In its purely religious action, Thought is the fountain of that Faith which forms the base of St. Paul's trinity of the primal elements of Character,—the foundation upon which hope and charity are to be elevated. How important, then, is it that this foundation should be wisely laid! Many persons think much in relation to religious subjects from the love of metaphysical reasoning; while their lives are not influenced by the doctrines they profess. This is an abuse of Thought, one of its fruits is bigotry. The more strongly a man confirms himself in any doctrine that he does not apply to life, the more elevated he becomes in his own estimation,—the more puffed up with spiritual pride,—the more full of contempt and hatred towards those who disagree with him. With such persons, purity of life is as nothing compared with faith in a certain sect of dogmas. There are some who think much of the vices of life, but always in relation to their neighbors, and thereby engender that form of bigotry called misanthropy. Both these classes misuse the faculty of Thought, making it subserve the purposes of contempt and hatred and debasing narrow-mindedness, instead of ministering to Christian love, that hopeth all things of its brother, and judges as it would be judged.

The more we study human nature out of ourselves, and in the light of the Understanding, the less we love it; but the reverse takes place, when we study our own hearts at the same time that we study the characters of our fellow-beings, and both in the light of Christian truth. We cannot hate our fellow-beings while we perceive that we are all of one family,—while we feel our own weakness and sinfulness; and we cannot despair of human nature while we believe that Infinite Wisdom has become its Redeemer and Saviour.