No. 18.
The abuses of free enquiry.
Galat. V. 13. - "Only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh."

The proper use of means constitute much of our moral discipline. Character seldom has a severer trial than when we are entrusted with...
interest, or of passion. In the presence of free inquiry, the weak, the superficial, the wicked, and the arrogant have attempted to find an analogy for their crude speculations, their pride of disposition, their silly errors, their foul communications. There are some who cannot afford to be at once statesmen and philosophers, and who, if they reason at all, must reason them- selves out of all religion. There are others who wish to find religion an imposition. It shall be a collection of fables, because if they be not so, they speak to them in accents of sternness. Many are determined to find in the word of truth a particular system, because it is just the system they will suit their tastes; and many will receive anything for the voice of God, rather than bear the reproach of being influenced by the prejudices of education or the opinions of early life. Now to all such the idea of religious liberty is an admirable refuge: for it affords an excuse specious in appearance, because it is grounded on one of the highest of our own privileges.
satisfactory to those by whom it is advanced, because it concurs with the previous tendency of inclination. But let such men remember the admonition of the Apostle, "as free, so not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God."

"Brethren," says Paul, "ye have been called into liberty;" from these words, I have spoken of the right and duty of free inquiry; but the Apostle adds, "only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh." From this part of the text I shall speak of some of the pernicious abuses of the right of free inquiry on religious subjects.

1. The first abuse which claims our notice is the name of freedom of inquiry to that spirit of liberty which unites with no religious sects or sometimes treated. The conduct of some men justifies us in the belief, that they deem it the sole object of life, to be many to make others merry. Wit must be excruciated, if innocence or purity be sacrified. No matter how high he rises, the subject of ridicule is not the spirit of enquiri

how it is, has been for ages, cherished and consecrated in the breasts of the wise and good, no matter though it involve interests which spread through eternity. I give us our only hold upon hopes, not alone make men something more than the being of a day, no matter though he who thus amuses himself be like the madman who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, I saith-an I not in short, still there are those who will have their laugh, who will esteem it their pride to make others laugh with them. And this is called liberty of thinking, freedom of enquiri

As well might you call insanity liberty, a boast of your freedom amidst the ravings of delirium. What would you think of the man who should cavalierly shout on the brink of a precipice, where one awaits his fall, because he is free? No one has a right to force him from the place? Deity, my son, is not freedom; the spirit of ridicule is not the spirit of enquiri.
On no subject is satire more attractive, or the fire more dangerous, than on the subject of religion. Perversity, originality, are qualities the exhibition of which we always admire. She will not fail to appear bold and original who ventures to despoil what the opinion of mankind has consecrated. She may scathe at those truths which others never think of but with reverence, or are incorporated with their most sacred feelings. She may build their sublime hopes. It is no reproach to religion that it is liable to ridicule, for what subject is not? Where, let me ask, is the boasted genius in pointing the finger of scorn at the cherished faith of nations? in making eternally a subject of mirth and derision a just? The sarcasm depends for its effect entirely on conspicuous excitement. I succeed in just the same proportion as it finds men interested to secure an excuse for their follies or their depravity. The laugh at religion is frequently the laugh of agony. He, whose conscience tells him that if religion be any thing, it is a grievous thing to him, will be glad to join in the ridicule of what he considers an enemy, if while he tries to persuade himself that its importance is thus diminished, he feels that a satirist cannot wipe out his sins.

In the arts and sciences, in the various departments of intellectual exertion, you would think them not very philosophical, who should attempt to diminish a system of reasoning by ridicule. If an argument should give you heartburn. And is it because religion is the most important subject in the world, that it is fitted for frivolity and trifling? No, my friends, there is neither sense nor decency in ridiculing sacred subjects. It is always the amount of a corrupted mind. A deformed heart is its famous influence no one can estimate. Argument may be answered, but "laughter" has been pointedly asked, "can you refute a sneer?" but it is not sheltered under the name of free inquiry the seed of every ridicule, but remember that though religion invites discussion, the ground on which we stand is holy and holy, and like the leader of the Jews in the visible presence of the Most High, we should tread on it as melting granite.
2. The privilege of free inquiry is abused, when it leads to the contempt of forms & positive duties. There is often a tendency in the minds of thinking men to an intellectual refinement & abstraction in their views of every thing connected with religion. It has seemed to considerations, as what in truth they are, "the keys to holiness," they easily proceed to persuade themselves, that they are nothing, because they are not every thing. We have, perhaps, observed the world much & carefully; we have seen the futilities of the mischiefs of gross pretexts of superstitions; we are convinced that the means of being religious, such as reading, hearing, the ceremonies of worship, have no value any farther than as they promote the subjugation of passion & appetite, as they make men pure, holy, & dutiful in virtue. We have seen in the gross abuse of these mean the shadows instead of the substance of goodness; if we have come to the conclusion that they constitute no part of that pure religion on alone meets the acceptance of God, & that

the spirit of holiness must live & grow in the heart, & there alone. All this is very well; & while we do not rashly pass to the opposite extreme from that on the one side with disgust, we may have learned a very valuable lesson. But the caution is not unnecessary, that we do not disregard instrumental duties, because we regard moral duties more, that we do not despise forms because we esteem them less than the substance. So that if we talk about the purity or spirituality of our views, we must all be more or less discerned by the aid of means which act upon the senses & feelings. We live in the midst of holiness; I thought God has given us such a soul, we may travel the world, no steps beneath the arch of the cultivator's eye hath not seen" of affections, & if, like the patriarch's dove, can find no rest on the waves of the world, but must fly to the ark of safety & of peace. All the same God has appointed that those powers be nurtured, of those affections cultivated, by means adapted to our condition, by the influence
of the objects we surround us. Forms are something more than symbols: they are the mode of existence of realities; let us beware, while we enthral them off, that we do not leave the realities with them too bare and unattractive to engage the devotion of reverence or the interest of affection. There may be minds to which they are not necessary, but, I believe, more to which they are not useful; certainly to those who constitute the great mass of society they are indispensable. We act unconsciously upon the truth of this principle. To why do we build and decorate our churches? Why do we clothe religious services in the dogmacy of firm ceremony? Why do we attend particular ordinances and modes of worship? Why do we separate ourselves from society except those ceremonies, feelings, and sensations of the heart influenced through the medium of the senses by the action of impressive objects because they have a pedantry beyond what sobriety considered the might seem to possess? If themselves they have no merit. No one can think of comparing in importance moral and positive duties. The forms are essential and immutable. At all times and every dispensation of religion; the latter are subject to change; they may vary in different ages according to the different genius and circumstances of a people. But it is to be feared that those who neglect the less, will in turn neglect the greater. Let us, therefore, be made in the solemnization of our religiousobservances, if these are sought to be have done, if not to have the other.
For example, if you consider the idea of developing a new product, you would need to conduct market research, gather customer feedback, and analyze the competition. This information will help you make informed decisions about the product's features, pricing, and marketing strategies. Additionally, it's important to consider the financial implications of developing the product, including the costs of research and development, production, and marketing. By carefully planning and executing these steps, you can increase the likelihood of success for your new product.

Another aspect to consider is the potential for scalability. As the product gains popularity, you may need to scale up your operations to meet the increased demand. This could involve upgrading your production facilities, expanding your supply chain, or hiring additional staff. It's crucial to have a clear plan in place to handle these challenges, so you can ensure smooth operation even as the product grows in popularity.

In conclusion, the development of a new product requires careful planning, thorough research, and strategic decision-making. By taking these steps, you can increase the chances of success and ensure that your product meets the needs of your target market.
position to rush from one extreme to another.

To overlook the intermediate steps, the exception Preservations, with a regard to not, on moral questions, the deduction of inferences from premises should ever be practised. There are some who, having been educated in the belief of certain articles of faith, either from indigence or reverence for whatever they have been

revered, have so deeply imprinted those sentiments in their minds, that they are for evermore committed to the

performance of the duties of conscience. They are so the reasonableness of which they have been taught, on the ground on which they believe it, if they find a think, they find, that the doctrines of their early life are irrational and

sequences at war with the character of God

the nature of man. Nor in this case, is there a fair and candid method of proceeding would be to enquire whether the doctrine teach such opinions are necessary in the faith. But a course quite different is too often pursued. When men find that the voice

of reason is given with the character of God's

it may have frequently occurred to us, that our religion has been resorted to to screen vice or to apologize for crimes, that it has been made not only to excuse but to sanctify the worst passions; that the powerful have pretended

not has been early engraved in their minds, is unfounded if unwarrantable, they are but too

long to hasten to the conclusion that it itself has no claims to confidence or respect. If they do not have religion in that form it has been has

naturally presented to their minds, they will have none at all. Their preconceived opinions are to them the whole of religion. If they relinquish those, they retain nothing. The truth of this remark is confirmed by the fact so often observed, that those ages and countries have been most fruitful of infidelity, in which the Gospel has been most nearly encumbered with human appendages of human inventions. No other way in which the abuses of party

have prepared the mind for scepticism. In looking back on history, particularly on some of the darker pages of the history of the church, it may have frequently occurred to us, that our religion has been resorted to to screen vice or to apologize for crimes, that it has been made not only to excuse but to sanctify the worst passions; that the powerful have pretended
to find in it a licence to oppress the weak, and that knavery & intrigue have consecrated those dark & malicious designs by appealing to its authority. That this spirit of mischief & evil "has sent out of his holy heavens & from the throne of his glory," has been made to serve the unhallowed purposes of interest or ambition. The view is repulsive; for nothing but frankness of mind will save us from that indistinguishable disgusting mixture to which it is for appropriate consequences, true character. We do but too easily pass to the conclusion that God would not communicate a revelation to mankind if it were to become the instrument of designing men to serve the Free of injustice, superstition, or fanaticism. But why will you make these abuses an argument against it? You will not surely say that they are the genuine fruits of the religion itself. You will not say that a religion, that teaches us that the Son came into the world to invite men to virtue & happiness, enjoining moderation of desire, humility, self-denial & the faithful discharge of duty, to bring under its jurisdiction the thoughts as well as actions, requires that the heart be pure as well as the external conduct blameless, that such a religion is naturally fitted to form tyrants, fanatics, & brutes, to make men vindictive & hypocritical. The slaves of passion of the votaries of ambition. Besides the objection drawn from the corruptions of religion does not vie with any peculiar force against it. It may be urged with equal justice against all the blessings of governments where the most highly prized for they are all liable to abuse. Liberty may become deceitful means, civil government is often tyranny, & means may be made poison. Yet you would not, therefore, renounce these privileges. And why will you give up to it, because its purity has been polluted & its brightness tarnished by the foul hands of designing & deluded men? Will you deny your favors, because his enemies have placed on his head the crown of thorns, & arrayed him in
the robe of scarlet? No, rather cherish the impression of that moment, when the glory of heaven were opened upon him, & the voice of the Conquering Prophet proclaimed "this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." It is something very different from the spirit of fair & candid enquiry, that will ever lead men to reject religion, because like every thing else it has been may be abused. I would not ask any one to "receive for doctrines the commandments of men," but I would have them inculcated & expounded with an inspiring hand, whatever may be the beauty or stains the purity of our religion; but even if the religion itself were not conscientiously professed, but held up as a holy sanctuary by the hand of man, it would have stood and will stand, on the seal of human mind. It has been well observed that all the diligence of investigation can only destroy "the silly outward & the pride, the superstitious, the knaveries & mandrakes have erected around the citadel of our faith; but the citadel itself is founded on a rock: the gates of hell cannot prevail against it; its master builder is You."
find a sanction for our deceptiveness. The only
security against superstition on the one hand, and
mercy on the other, is to cherish a deep sense of
necessity. The importance of the object on which enga-
ges our attention. We should not be among those
who consider their creed, like the ark, not to be	be touched by a bold hand, even to uplift
ed its articles, like the stones of the altar,
upon not to lift up the thought of a custom,
though with the design to finish a adorn,
were but to profane & degenerate them. But
on the other hand, we should not catch the
spirit of those who, in the real field of free en-
quiry, regard religion as a tempting to ordi-
nary loath, of those who would rather shake
the pillars of the temple of God, than not
be distinguished for boldness & supe-
rior to common fears. Above all, we should re-
member that all our speculations & enqui-
ries about religion are idle, may much
worse than idle, if they do not result in the
improvement of the heart, in making
us more pure, more holy, more fit for heaven,

...
There is one point, truly, suggested by my text, to which I would for a moment call your attention: it is the duty of faithful perseverance. And not only does it enjoin us to enjoy our liberty, but with an impressive emphasis commands us to stand fast by. What we have long possessed or enjoyed we are apt to undervalue or neglect.

But if there be any blessing, the value of which we should be particularly earnest never to lose sight of, it is to estimate lightly, it is the blessing of pure rationality. We may apply to it, the language of Scripture, saying, it is not a vain thing, for it is our life. Our religious institutions, our forms of worship, when they are associated in our minds with all that is holy, paternal in the august thought of God; all that is adapted to win the homage of the heart in the character of the Saviour, all that is elevating,
have been overcast: you have been called to struggle with difficulties, to bear under depression, and meet disappointments of an ordinary kind. But I hope that a better day is beginning to dawn when you, that under the guidance of God you will recover an inconsiderable degree of your prosperity. I know you will not be discouraged, but will persevere to the end in the good cause of your faith have espoused. 'Tis the cause of truth, righteousness, of God; it's deeply connected with the highest interests of yourself, your families. Much as you have been called to do, I doubt not if you are still resolved to go on with no relaxed effort, that you may gradually yet surely recover strength, stature at least in safety. When you reflect that within these walls you will, some help, from Sabbath to Sabbath, call upon the name of your God.
that when you shall have gone down to
your children and theirs for generations to come, it will
probably come better to offer their prayers, praise,
and listen to the instructions of the Scriptures.
To be guided and animating in the way of truth
and goodness, in that, when you reflect in all
the sacred associations connected with a sanctu-
ary, where we have, you will feel how much
there is to bind your best feelings to most
consecrated interests to this place of your
adornments. God grant that the smile of
this providence may rest upon you, that
sustained by the might of his arm you may
yet go on your way rejoicing. Remember
I beseech you, the impression of the
forces, therefore, my beloved brother, be
stiff and do not weary in well
done.
O those who art our judge, our guardian: 32, 32
Deliver us from the sword, the mouth and fiend.
Confidence, to protect us from error, from passion, from guilt. Preserve us
from all abuses, especially from the abuse of our rights & privileges
that hast manifestly hastened upon us. We
pray that we may be impressed with a deep sense of our solemn responsibility as the 6th follows
that we may watch & be sober as those
who are to give an account unto the Judge of
all the earth. May we be free from
liberty from a cloud of malignitiveness, guilt,
as the servants of God. Save us in truth from
the guilt of those who inherit the privileges
of that free born birth we are called by
the gospel. Save us from all the influences
of passion, of prejudice, of pride, of desire;
affections, of partial & biased views. May we
remember that the ground on which we stand is holy;
feel that the Lord is there. We thank thee.