No. 84.

On the parable of the Sower.
Matth. XIII. 3-9. “And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had no moisture, and they sprang up because they had no depth of earth; and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: but other fell on good ground, and brought forth fruit; some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold.”—Parallel passage, Luke VIII. 8. Mark IV. 3.

In this instructive figure our Saviour discovers that perfect knowledge of mankind, as forms one of the most striking traits in his extraordinary character. He seems constantly to have had in view the springs of action, to have been familiar with the operation of the passions.
of the various results which arise to the growth of moral excellence. In the parable before us, he has shown that where perfectly aware, what would be the reception of $t$ $g$ in what various degrees it would gain the assent of mankind. Certainly, undoubtedly framed the parable with a reference to the character of mankind. Out of undoubtedly framed the parable with a reference to the character of mankind. Feeling of the men of that day, of those to whom it was first to be addressed. And this Apostle, after all, may be applied with almost the same force & justice to mankind in every age & nation. The truths which it contains may appear under different modifications; but the substance remains the same. The picture as drawn by our Saviour is undoubtedly a representation, taken from real life, of the mental & moral state of people of this time. With reference to the reception they would give to it; but all the darker colors & essential lineaments are as true & faithful to nature now, as they were then. And it seems to me, that there is something very remarkable in this forethought, which seems to have possessed, of the different manner in which this religion would be the different degrees in which it would be

welcomed & retained by different characters. When

revised in connexion with the nature of the religion itself & with the hope of its founders, this circumstance seems to be one of the traits of super-human agency. Do not say, that it amounts to a proof of the divine

will & qualifications of Y. G., but it is one of those accidental circumstances, not strengthening the faith of a mind, already convinced on other & severer grounds. It is just, that sort of oversight, which one should expect from one, who came in the name & power of God, to communicate new truths of the highest importance.

V. & to implant the means of moral & spiritual improve-

ment, who came not to use force, but to apply powerful motives, not to compel men to be good, but to enable them to be so. It gives strong evidence of that calmness & pervasiveness of these tenets towards

expectations, which are very far from distinguishing it from the character of the conduct of an inventor. It gives evidence of the total absence of that enthusiasm so common to a mind heated with an overwhelming

ness for its own plans & inventions. Of that arrogance
confidence and grand defiance of opposition, other persons not in the least moved by one, she can wield the arm of power in defence of what she advances, gave me into submission... Such has very often been the time of the temper of importunity in religion... in the warmth of that zeal in the pride of their power, they seem not to have imagined, that there could be obstacles, and that these would greatly moderate their success; or that they have acted as if they supposed, that every thing must bend & bow before them... And it was especially the case, that they did not use proper means, that they anticipated such effects... On the contrary, we saw the divine design to bring a religion from God, which was to operate by enlightening the mind and presenting its powerfull & strong motives; & not to dispose men by the influence of principles; it could not derive so much from the strength of passion, or the assistance of power; of course it would be received, & its influence would be felt in very various degrees, according to the different temper, mood, & habits of thought of those to whom it was announced. Of this fact, one is sure, that even in the gospel we are not to consider, that he was perfectly aware. He had no extravagant of some expectations concerning the success of this religion in the world, he knew that its height & influence would be greatly be opposed by prejudice & opposed by all the motives of an ascender from various quarters; & the very fact that he himself should so clearly foresee so faithfully describe the manner of its reception, & operation, is one on that he had none of the passions or the arrogane of an impostor... In our retellings in the parable of the sower, we must be guided by the explanation which himself gives of it. He tells his disciples the reason that by the seed which was sown he means "the word," i.e. the religion whch he was about to propagate to the world, under its instruction, its requirements, its demands, & its regenerate... But on the other side, the story tells, the place of this seed, the good ground, he represents the different states of minds, for which this religion would be acceptable. If this seed should be received either fully or partially, or rejected...
Before we proceed to consider the parable more particularly, it will be well to remark, how, notwithstanding its renovation in moral and religious excellence is owing to our own use of the means, all are put into our hands. The seed is sown in the soil of our minds; but if we do not cultivate that soil, we shall see no fruit. After God has given us the means, he will not interfere supernaturally to awak-e us and procure by them. The All-mighty, by an exertion of his power, made the good seed: he sowed it in the earth; but we see no fruit in the parable as he did not. So too, however by a miraculous influence make the idle, the refractory, and the hardened, as restless and pious, as those are, who comply with all the rules of their industry to know and to perform their duty to God: man; but we see, by the experience of every day, that He does not do it; if we are thus taught that we are not to receive the means of grace, y then said in moral and religious assistance, but that we are to endeavor that having received these means, it lays with ourselves, whether we shall be righteous or wicked. In this parable, the hearts of the sick; i.e. those who are not in the enjoyment of the means of religion, are divided into four classes, etc. follow each other in a regular gradation. 'The first are those on whom it makes no impression, the second those on whom it makes a very slight and transient one; the third, whose impressions are stronger, yet lasting, but not nevertheless in time or forever, second those on whom it has a permanent influence and produces a perfect effect. Read on and consider each of these...

1. The first class is represented by the seed cast upon the good seed, which the fowl came and devoured. This one Sar, himself thus explains, "when any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, etc." This is the one who receives seed by the way side. In this description, it portrays the hard-bitten path, trodden down by the feet of successive passers-by. At the time of our Lord, the number of those who refused to give even a moment's attention to the claims of salvation.
moat of spiritual truths. It was reduced to a mere skeleton of forms and ceremonies. It was no spirit there to animate it. It consisted in nothing more than a summing up of what is doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God. The great part of those, whose minds had been disciplined to regard religion as an empty form of spiritual instructions of which the lowliness and humble appearance of Jesus were sufficient by reputation to prevent their attacking it at all. But the mind of a disciple. It was not much on one whom they expected. For their Messiah. Jesus was not a victorious leader of his countrymen, nor did he cherish the pride of natural distinction; therefore they turned away disgustedly from him. He was put away by the pay of the tax collectors. To set his house in what he was. But even if they are not the same as we powerful causes now in action to produce insensibility to the claims of the cross, there are other causes which do not fail to make the same effect. We have still reason enough to lament, that a considerable part of mankind are so heedless and unhumble.
out to whatever comes to them in the name of religion. There is a deadness of soul, a want of feeling with respect to sacred things, which can scarcely be presumed or supported by any motives you can suggest. In many instances this indifference is owing to the false representations which have sometimes been made of religion itself. Doctrines which have sometimes been taught generally called under the title of religion, as one at once with reason and the declarations of Scripture, would destroy the moral and mental happiness of man; and it is no wonder that reflecting minds should turn away from such a system with indifference if not with contempt, if mistaking this for a true representation of it, should refuse to give any attention to the subject. Thus the instructions of divine truth become to them like seed cast on the rocky side. It is much to be lamented that persons themselves, by making human inventions on divine truth, should cause any to neglect or despise their most important interests. And the reason why men give so little heed to religion is that it is so subject to common, men to men. They have been accustomed from infancy to the merits of claims of oath they have so often heard, that it came in time to consider it merely as another of course... We all know how much more easily our attention is engaged with what is new, even if it be trifling, with what is old, even if it be important. And thus religion ceases to arrest our attention, because it does not recommending itself in the language of nature. But from whatever source it may proceed, this bland, this sensible state of mind as a most melancholy and tolerable condition. It is like the close and barren soil given over to be trodden under feet of men. The seed that are there given there are blown away by the slightest breath of wind, or as one says, told us, the power of the air comes down upon them. There is a flesh a degree of negligence and stupidity which becomes insensible even to the power of eloquence of truth: if those who have reached this stage are the most incurable of mankind, no remedy will operate upon their minds; instruction gained no hold on their attention; argument, persuasion are lost upon those who will not listen. It is in vain that any using the promises, or hopes, or threats of the law, it is in vain that our present motives of the highest importance and most powerful tendency—"you talk to those
II. The course of those in whom the word of the kingdom, i.e. the necessities of divine truth, made but a slight impression, some of the seed, say, the parable, fell again on stony places, where they had not much earth, so that with joy received it; but when the sun was up, they were scorched; because they had no root, they withered away. In this explanation of the parable, gives the meaning of this part thus: "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word; and even receiveth it with joy; yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while. Then cometh the tribulation of persecution, and the end thereof is unbelief, because of the word, which he hath received. And so are described those who are of hot temperaments, who gladly hearken to religion, but are early shaken from their allegiance to that work, whose good principles spread definitions, cause over their minds, without obtaining any settled abode there. Of this custom, of faith, besides there was familiar danger among the followers of x, when the parcel was delivered. It was a time when the profession of x was full of trouble. He who then expressed the cause of x must lay his account with suffering, perhaps with death. He must encounter all that contention or persecution could threaten in his way. There were a thousand prejudices, a thousand malignant feelings starting up in every side to oppose x. He was the followers of x. In such circumstances as our Saviour saw, that when persecution should arise, because of the word, the attachment of many to him, and his religion would wither away. But some of those, who had minds sufficiently candid and attentive to welcome him at first, would not abide the path of strong heat of trial, but the slightest touch of adversity would be sufficient to quench the weak flame they were bound to him. And such was the fact; many of those who had been attracted by his miracles or his instructions, were driven back to their errors, because they had not firmness enough to hold those same pieces to the cause, at the condition of the times.
required. Pottrials of such severity we have reason to thank God, that we are not exposed; yet at the present day, there are those, who receive the seed in cory crafts, & in whose minds there is not sufficient depth of soil to support the growth of religious principles. There are many, whose heart is too open to receive religious impressions, but not to retain them. The having heard the word, immediately receive it with joy, but having no root in themselves endure for a time only. Good resolutions, & good principles are like shadows; passing over their minds; they come & go in quick succession, & leave vacant a time behind. This is particularly the case with people, who make their religion consist in strong emotion, & sudden feelings, in a quick transition from fears to gladness, from the anguish of conscience to the joy of assured salvation. It is not from such a religion, that you can expect the pure and genuine fruits of virtue; for good life, admirably its practice is no sooner as it is violent, & those who have the evidences of such high-minded conceptions of return to the world, as much the slaves of passion yore as ever... There are a thousand causes, which active to cool the ardour of desire, to divert the attention of the sensible; unsettled affections of the fears of sudden temptation, the violence of passion, anxiety of distemper, &c. &c. nor yet in memorable solitudes, in memorable cases, disproportionate to the impressions of religious truth yore prevented them from being realized. And many are the trials, & these painful doubts for self-denial, & these sacrefices of self-interest, &c. the standard of duty sometimes requires... So long as our religion leads us in sunshine through pleasant paths, it cannot suffer any opposition; but the moment it is left as far as it attains some favorite passion, & some long cherished hope, when it comes with its lessons of sacrifice, & when our inclinations are our pleasures, & demand our de- sire, then as our frame entitles it, we are even offended, the service is too hard, & we desert, & go over to the enemy... Indeed it would be a long task to enumerate all the causes which make the impressions of religion transient, as the morning cloud passing by; & we know, that it is so, that there are too many objections in the moral world, when the seed is sown in strong places of finds no weakness of earth...
These classes are described thus: “and some fall among thorns, y the thorns spring up and choke them.” And thus explains: “so that receiveth seed among thorns, is so that heareth not the word, & the cares of this world, & the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word; & he becomes unfruitful.” These are the states, these confirmations are more permanent, efficacious than the last mentioned, but they, religious principles, religious motives are finally crumbling out of this minds of the thingy &dlying cares, entirely are plunged. And here too, as well as in the others, the change was peculiar at the time of 7. Of them, not the duration of 7, more to become living members of his religion, it was required by the nature of the case, that they should devote all their time to all their energy to this single purpose. Their office required the entire dedication of themselves to the preaching & part of the glad tidings of the gospel; & thereof from the care; was great, that the cares of the world, especially by the entangling allusions of riches, might distract them, aside from their duty, & divide, & distract their affections, might choke the word, & render them unfruitful. And

peculiar, contentious all at the present day, are not uncommon. Our religion is spread far & wide, & well established & it allows us a full & free participation in all the innocent, pure, virtuous enjoyments of life. Still it is true, that there is but to comprehend, account, & to show us away from the path of sin duty. Do not the cares of the world & the deceitfulness of riches choke the preachers of virtue & religion need, as much as ever? This true our religion not only permits, but requires honorable & honest exertions to secure a competency of the means of support for ourselves, & for those who depend on our care & protection; but there is still reason to fear, lest we fall for ourselves to be oppressed & overwhelmed by the abasing cares, & harassing circumstances, in which we must be engaged, lest we contract the habit of seeking after riches, & the & consumption of all that can be desired in life. & forget that happiness at last must depend on the state of efficiency, on the principles of religion & virtue may have in our minds. There is something in the combination, hasty, & tumult, into which we are thrown by our efforts to stir, that is exceedingly unfriendly to the
preservation of a calm and unyielding adherence to the dictates of virtue and good principle, something not as much cherished in the mind as rendered us so fruitful. Our own observa-
tion will teach us that there are many in the world who exhibit these bad effects of the cares and labours of life, yet it is these, when not pruned so aptly described by saying, that "come and fall among thorns, the thorns of many a
helpless one."—

The remainder of this passage I shall consider in another discourse. In the mean time, God grant, that we have it in view to apply all that we hear and all that we learn to our own edification and improvement.

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Other sins, from whom we look for all good, enable us to learn edifying lessons from the instructions of those holy angels. May it not be woman, that our love, with broken tears, in the voice of divine wisdom, that may attend us, that we may improve our characters by what we hear, by memory, by faith, and, by good principles. Suffer is not to be had:

ly difficult to us most important interests, if we are not one of the number of those who, in our own interest, appear wise and unwise. If good principles, if the idea of it, have taken root in our hearts, may we not suffer them to wither away, may we not be like those who bearing no root in them selves endure hurt for a while. They are so wound from suffering the curse, the descent, and them. This could not be the good seed, the unfruitful, but not the violence of temptation and passion scatter whatever good inheritance we may receive, and justify us by the end, when truth is prepared to be received and applied to glory.