No. 96,

On the partible of the two sons.

The parable contained in this passage was, we see, addressed to the Jewish rulers on a particular occasion: therefore to understand it, we must consider what that occasion was, how the words of our Saviour applied to it. It appears that our Saviour was in the temple in his usual manner instructing the people, who were assembled there. The chief priests and the elders of the people came into the temple, and demanded of what authority he taught the people, and on the character of a king. He must remember that the chief priests and
elders of the people constituted what was called the san-
dehram, the great, supreme council of the nation. It was
the power of this council to decide upon the claims of
those who were to be considered as full-fledged teachers. All
sorts of determinations were made in such cases, as well
thought to be such. On the exercise of the power, they
put the question to Jesus, who we have already men-
tioned, that he wished to know why without their authority he held
faith as a public teacher. We well know that he was
his most insistent enemies, as it was doubtful in the
opinion of hostility that they asked this question. They
hoped perhaps to better him into some expression of con-
tempt for their authority; or, thus to diminish their
inguence among the people. To the insinuating question
was made a reply full of wisdom. He knew that
they were too prejudiced to be convinced or sat-
isfied with any direct evidence he might exhibit, if
their direct evidence he must find in another quell, which
must lead them into inextricable
difficulties. He offers a fine opportunity for confounding
these men of preachers, their own dispositions. "Tell
also, what one thing would be, and do tell me. Will
thee tell me by what authority I do these things? The
baptism of John, whoso was it from heaven or of men," i.e.
did John receive his power, in order to baptize him above
him from a human source? Here was a question in place
then in a dilemma from which they could not escape; on
the one hand, if they refused to acknowledge the Lord.
received his office from divine authority, they should en-
counter the resentment of the people, who held John to
be an inspired teacher; on the other, if they should ac-
knowledge that his baptism was from heaven, then would come
the confounding, simple answerable question, "why did ye
not believe him?" In this prevailing situation they
could only reply, "she cannot tell." Jesus, therefore, re-
turns the same answer upon them, "neither do I tell you
by what authority I do these things." This he desires
to evade their question, but it because this was the only
way in which he would reach them, as they were

Thus we see that this parable was intended to meet a peculiar situation of things, a particular state of mind pro-
acting at that time among the Jews. The leading men of
the nation had shrunk by demands of some evidence of the au-
thority by which they acted; of this parable conveys a report
in the unfair state of their minds in rejecting the teaching
of John the Baptist, who had already been witness-
XII. It probably intimates that while they remained so pro-
tected by hypocrisy, it would be impossible to present evi-
dence that would satisfy them. If the Baptist was the
harbinger of the Messiah, as he blew the trumpet of the
own coming through the wilderness, it was from the occa-
sional words, that was accomplishing. He came as if we may
do say, to prepare the way, to make the straight path wide, for the descent
of the angel, who should professors of them. Then
know, I have to remove the corrupt minds of the Jewish
nation. He removed the claim of obedience in their case
by teaching them for this bride's fitness or heathen to
make them to receive as she took them as those who
be taught them that the great dominion of moral rectitude
be.
about religion, and when invited into the vineyard
mentioned, she became to say, "we will not;" more yet from the
gave a free reception to him, who came to tell them of the heav-
aliens, whereas they preferred parents." Though earnestly told
them to the wilderness to see as singular a man to beg
his discourse, yet they were more affected by a desire to
receive his admonitions with a more becn yent, than
to comply with them. But having some prejudices than
their more deserving countrymen, y being guided by com-
mon sense of common honesty, they were struck by the disinterested
integrity of John the Baptist, were convinced by the ori-
defection and the shame and guilt of his admor-
nations, several of them were not only left unredeemed,
but actually returned from their areas to converted to
idolatry; their minds became susceptible of moral-
formations: when they found that the whole object of his
exhortations was to urge them to return to virtue, as the
means of their own welfare, of the public peace, safety; that
his instructions were authorized by an uncommon appear-
ance of integrity and authority, than their prejudices gave

was at hand, that the day of vengeance of God
must now begin, else they might no longer look for
the presence of the presence of God. For the axe was now
hastened to the root of the tree. If the did without
fruit, they would inevitably be cut down
like a natural branch tossed to the burning." Such
was the stern severe teacher, who reached from the new
denies. He exclaimed, "repent for the kingdom of heaven is
at hand." Such a teacher was not to amend the
Jews, rather from their lethargy of disbelief their errors-
to add to them the thunder of his reproach, y bring
them to something like moral feelings. Such an opinion
wanted to prepare the earth to the present. A large
of their open the fountains of the holy temple, that the light
might shine on their new ances in that was brought
to go before and announce the coming of the Messiah. Now
this man, the herald of it, is he, who was receive so disf
ently by the two different classes of Jews, one sect that
is represented by that of the two sons in the parable. The
publicans of low classes, who did not seem to care much
way, their natural honesty took place, their moral sensibility was awakened, their own consciences took part with the prophet's address, many of them openly professed their repentance, 
wherein they sincerely by a real amendment of their lives. These characters are set forth by the son, who said, 'I will not, but afterward repent.'

But the other party, the pariahs of Israel, 'when they saw the admirable effects of John's ministry in the instruction of the people, were still not all the more disposed to return to their own lives, but to pray any respect to that worthy prophet of God, that no one of the people, they too were led by curiosity to attend the prophet's ministry, and probably meet with all the solemn appearances of reverence for religion, with pretenders to a most ready and practical obedience to every divine precept, professing to pay entire respect and obedience to every true prophet of God. They said, 'We go in.'

When they found that John directed them to the straight path of righteousness, that he inculcated the precepts of genuine morality, that he warned them against pride, overweening, of lying, of blood to them of the need they had of repentance, the immediately turned their backs upon him with an apparent scorn of hearing; his instructions were lost upon them.

Encore they were represented by the son, who said, 'God is not yet sat. The language of each of these classes was the reverse of this conclusion. We see them, now naturally the question. With the story of the people put to x, labor him to this principle, how the people was adapted to achieve their redemption and the question. It was telling them that they had always manifested a temper of mind, that showed they were determined not to admit any evidence in favor of x; if this temper is displayed by a comparison of their reception of the Prophet with the reception of the lower classes of people who gave him. And it is not difficult to account for the tenacity of prejudice of the pariahs of the kingdom. The name, in which it is found in the model, thrown down at one all their preconceived, baffled all
these calculations of horrors foreseen in all they so much expected. They were in a state of mind the hearts of the
people filled with a dread of such a religion as this. There was no simplicity of heart or enough in their minds in these matters, by their thoughts were confined within a channel too narrow. They were the interpreters of the law of Moses, by they had an almost ecclesiastical authority among the people. They could not endure these distinctions leveled to see themselves thrown into the common mass, with no mark to separate them to peculiar honours. Besides by long habit, their minds were formed to a taste for an artificial, conventional, intricate system of religion, as they could not subdue, as it had no concern except with the heart, it was to establish its empire there only. But the lower classes of the people, on whom these men looked with contempt, were free from most of these causes of prejudice, hostility to it; though they were sincere, yet as wise as generally more easily convinced than bigotry, they were more ready to receive the benefits of the law, if the law itself was not to enter their houses as the elders of the people, by these strong expressions, 'will I go in unto you, that the publicans and harlots go unto the kingdom of God before you.' If John came into your midst of righteousness, you believed him not; but the publicans and harlots believed him, if ye, when he saw it, rejoiced not afterwards, that ye might believe him... as the same as saying, even that believe him... which is the same as saying, even that believe him... which is the same as saying...
mind man. Because our Saviour told the pharisees, that
the publicans and sinners entered the kingdom of God be
ter; it has been inferred, as a general prin-

ciple, that the more moral man is most in an easy way to be saved, as the prefiguration of Abraham's son. This


drawing inference is a most lamentable proof. Among

the scriptures may be perceived by ignorance of this

attainment to opinions stuck out in the heart, one

the more study.

The passage, at the conclusion of our subject gives

me subject to any such inference: it refers, as are here seen, to the different states of mind, in which the passions

of the human classes of the people exist, with regard to the
treatment of the publicans, the honest men, to a state

of blindness and obstinacy in the one party, and of free-
dom from prejudice, though accompanied by vices from

the other, if open, meant to assert that in this intention of their minds, feeling

the latter, i.e. the publicans, were more likely to go into

the kingdom of heaven, not to adopt the custom of

the cut off, the pharisees of olden, with all their old

been prejudices, of hundred of proud preconceptions. There

was more likely to yield to truth, than the other, but

this is a different, a very different thing. From what

any that, those who continue in the practice of avowing

scandalous enormities, and all in the end, the less likely
to become subjects of grace, than those who once go

through the mount of moral duties. Of there be any

thing which can break down all moral distinctions, it

really destroys every encouragement to a good life, it

is the idea that religion is a thing that concerns

accidentally, as it were, being its subjects by hered.

it is quite as likely, they once so, to take the bad, as the

good, the vicious as the virtuous. This is opposing

at once the flood gate to licentiousness, giving you

liberty to sin as much as they please. If good or bad

not only no help, but even a hindrance to salva-
tion; why, then, what is there to restrain us from going

on heedless, reckless in the ways of the transgressors,

expecting finally to be reconciled by some, in some way.
It remains for us to draw from this passage that special instruction, wh. may be adapted to our own educa-
tion. We find in the conduct of each of the two sons something to blame or something to commend. Of each 
times may learn a good lesson for themselves. When the first 
son was invited to work in the vineyard, he replied, "I will 
not." Now although be afterward repented and went, yet his 
refusal at first is by no means commendable, yet still 
carefully remember that it is not for this refusal, 
that he is blamed, but because he changed his mind. 
He did at last obey, because he actually did the will of 
his father, and was sufficient to set off the criminality 
of this rude answer, "I will not." Still the answer itself 
is much to be considered; the reason of the other son, You 
see, is far more respectable; of course, though he was too 
vertical to be faithful to his promise... Now what are we 
to learn from this? We should learn that religion is to be 
professed, that it deserves of requires such an external, 
visible respect, to be paid to it in works, & actions, as shall 
be decent & exemplary. When we call upon to manifest a 
regard to ty, we are doing no, to say, "you will not," even if in 
our lives we shew that we do regard it; we should rather 
pay with the other son, "I go," & then time to make up for 
Jerom good... For, whereas good may be the influence 
of religion in the breast, it should not be confined there; 
we should wear the badge of it before the world; we shall 
early meet the stern name; without fear of without shame, 
we should acknowledge ourselves the followers of a, by 
doing no attention to the forms of public worship, by 
praying public respect to their institutions, by showing 
in the two placing sensible ordinances of the Gospel, & a 
section of the Lord's Chapel... The kind and influence of each 
other," example: if be otherwise to the institution of ages 
other to respect them. You owe it to yourselves, you 
one at your children, you owe it to your families, you 
one at the religious society, with all you are connected up.
one it in the tenor and subject of your letter, which you had not published to the public by means of the newspapers. If you do not, although your lines may be read by persons of good sense, we must consider you as pulling in a very important duty.

But though an outward profession is required, more, much more, is too required. Let us now turn to the conduct of the two sons, after they had given their answers. The first said, I will not; but make it afterwards profitable, the second said, I will, but also, I will not. Here the blame is worst, because their conduct is worse. The first, shall better than he promised, the other promised, but has never fulfilled it. The lesson we have here to learn is, that all professions are vain without a good life; that they are our bounden duty, yet when they stand alone, are not accompanied with real and true good sense, they are like a hypocritical show of faith and virtue, followed by wilful disobedience. Good life is the best proof of a good heart. God will accept of no words, nor promises in the place of moral sincerity. The bondage that lies

merely from the help, He never bears with favour. The form of godliness with the absence thereof. We will not evade a spiritual task. It is when we strive to form our hearts to the spirit of obedience to his will, when we seek to imitate the example of a hidden, of the act, in the ways of well being, that alone we can live for his acceptance.

To conclude, the best, the complete, real character of the man, is the purest profession of practice, who prays with willing, and pleasure the tribute, or the command of the good side of society, requisite to the natural acknowledgment of religion, or the joy of rendering without ostentation in the public forms of language of devotion, observes the solemn ordinances of God; but whose life at the same time speaks the inward sense of his mind, more significantly of powerfully than words can express; whose conduct corresponds to the sentiments which are entertained in his offices of devotion — who is one with the same man in public and in private, at church and at home, in business in the world, invariably pursuing the great end of life.
for such God placed them here, in the practice of all that is right & good, useful & valuable, honorable & becoming according to his own best judgment, of the known will of his Maker. Such is the man, who selects the best parts in the conduct of each of the two sons in the family, delegates them in his own, such as he, who only invited to the vineyard, says "Ye will go", if they perform his promise.

Feb. 1821.

Eternal A.M. God, we pray that our hearts may be filled with love to the Father and Son. May we bring to the subject of religion, faith, and love, our minds, consecrating the truth in the love of it, striving to keep concordence void of offence towards God or towards man. Conform us by thy truth: thy word is truth. May we study the instructions, obey the precepts, imitate the example of Jesus. May we cherish the spirit of reverence for the institutions of the God, may all its truths & hopes, & warnings have an efficacy on our hearts. May we remember that without goodness, etc.
At home, March 11th. 1834, - forenoon.
At home, Friday lecture July 14. 1834.