No. 196.

God no respecter of persons.
Acts 10:34. Then Peter opened his mouth and said—

"I perceive that God is no respecter of persons—"
Romans II. 11. "For there is no respect of persons with God."

In every view we can take of the character of the All, there is this consoling elevating thought, that we can turn from all the weakness of imperfection of man to contemplate one, with whom no weakness or imperfection can have place. And in proportion to the strength of faith will be the strength of this consolation. The mind seeks earnestly for something, on which to rest firmly without fear, but she finds it nowhere below the everlasting God. Man is partial and wavering; but God has no respect of persons. We are governed by our passions, our prejudices, all the capricious feelings we gather up as we pass along in life. With man there is respect of persons; he suffers his partialities to sway his judgment, in whose partialities often founded upon the most trivial unworthy
circumstances. Some slight distinctions of fortune or of accident are sufficient to bias our opinions & to carry our affections after them. We admire, after it admiration of submission & blinds the people to every thing, but the fascinating influence which surrounds it. Power will always find Scope of those who will bow the knee, & court its favour. Great talents attract a retinue of followers, who amidst the acclamations of enthusiasm forget the distinction between virtue & vice. We have each of us our particular circle of friends, to whom we are blindly partial, whose interests we are eager to promote with but little regard to merit. In short, look around where you will, if you find man at all, partial, capricious, & misjudging being, his understanding constantly warped by prejudice, & his taste strongly affected by slight of local causes.

With what relief do we turn from this scene of weakness & imperfection to that mighty Being whose impartiality is unerring, far beneath whose feet roll the storms of passion, & over the brightest fates
thine no cloud of care can throw even a passing transient shadow.

The Apostle declares that God is no respecter of persons;—that is, that God is impartial in the distribution of his favour. And yet there are appearances respecting whom might be dispensed to ask, how they can be reconciled with this attribute of impartiality. Are there not great inequalities in life with regard to the good things, which we call blessings?—Surely all men do not enjoy the favour of God alike?—Are not some in the possession of all the means of happiness, while others travel on their pilgrimage in the lonely path of mean-est wretchedness?—Is there the stately mansion rear its imposing front—does there not stand by its side the cottage, whose inhabitants knows no change but from toil to toil, and yet at their board with avails of meanness?—Is not one man blessed with health, his arms nerve with strength, his blood rolling pure vigorous through his veins, himself
always gay with animation, energy; while by his side walks one, whose steps are the steps of feebleness. His life is one long disease, with whom the wheel at theTierns but faintly & slowly turns round. Are not some gifted with great endowments of mind, qualified to follow far in the upward path of light, where the investigation of truth leads, to guide society & influence the age in which they live; while others are circumscribed within narrow bounds of intellect, & can do nothing but imitate & learn? Do not some live in countries where all the means of happiness, refinement, education are scattered in profusion around them. Do not others dwell amidst darkness, barbarity, madness, ferocity? Do not a part of the world blessed with the influences of light, do they not turn with lovely gratitude to the light that comes from Jesus the anointed, the beloved of God? While others remain held by the darkest forms of error, are carried captive by the idlest follies & the greatest delusions. Religion is the offering of dark passions
silly inventors to imagined deities, as stupid savages
as their worshippers? - Was if these differences do ex-
it, how, it may be said, how does it appear that
God is no respecter of persons? - Is there no parti-
ty, where so much is given to one, so much with-
held from another? - But it should be remember-
ed, that in all this view of the subject we tend
together ideas, that ought to be kept distinct. In
the same place, many of the blessings which appear to be
differently distributed among mankind, are
such as depend almost entirely on the voluntary ex-
erations of individuals, - of course this variety must
take place, unless the free agency of individuals be
suspected or destroyed. - The outward means of hap-
niness, riches, honour, influence, are in most cases of
this kind; - they are generally the consequence of the
reward of exertion and toil; - the price paid for them
is usually labour, self-denial, - or from the very
different exertions, sh men make, a corresponding
in possession and enjoyment should arise, who will
tax the government of the M. first, as if they were
partial?—by leaves us all free to make effects; if we will not make them, let the blame fall where it ought. But even when this variety in the possession of the blessings of life happens from causes beyond our power to control, we ought to be slow to complain of inequality in the ways of God. Are you sure that these things, if not you make to pompous a display, are in reality blessings? Are they, as you tell us, that riches have spoiled many a man:—that power has intoxicated, corrupted many a heart that wished it:—that health has often no other effect than to give one a strength for vice, to render them more wanton, forgetful of God:—that great talents are often only the instruments of great crimes:—that profound knowledge only a vaster capacity for doing wrong. Now viewing these envied advantages in this light, would you speak of them as blessings?—certainly not. They are no blessings, abstractedly considered; whether they are blessed or not, depends on their use. We therefore make and
deceptive statement, when we ascribe together what we consider the good things of life, to charge these with partiality in conferring them on some to the
exclusion of others. When perhaps those who have them are the most unhappy and wretched of men... But in
the 2d place, taking this objection in another point of view, we may remark, that even with regard
to these things, in which there is a striking and unanswerable difference in the condition of men, no argument
can fairly be drawn against the impartiality of the righteous Governor of the world. In order to make
this evident, we must remember that God is to be considered by us in two characters: in one, as he
is the original giver of every gift we enjoy; the Being, who bestows upon us all our advantages, our
opportunities; in the other, as he is the judicial distributor of rewards and punishments, the Being,
who will recompense us according to our use or improvement of his gifts. Considered in the former charac-
ter, there may be great diversity in the bestowment of privileges and blessings; I confess; considered in
the latter character, his government is regulated...
by one uniform & unchanging principle... Nor the

object of this is to leave out of sight this distinc-
tion of characters in the Deity... When we maintain

that there is no respect of persons with God, we

mean not to say, that He distributes the same fa-

vours to all in this life, but that the principle

by which He will judge, reward or punish man-

kind, are equal & impartial, far removed from all

caprice, from all fluctuation, from all that is weak

or varying, that his lasting or final favour is built

on lasting, even on an eternal foundation. What

though, He who rules heaven and earth has made great
differences in the gifts wh He bestows on his chil-
dren here; what though some are placed amidst

the genial influences of culture, improvement &
refinement, while others settles the thick night of
ignorance & barbarity; what though a part of the

world is elevated & guided by the love of Jesus, then
the breathings of its divine consolations, are caused
by its thrilling warnings, are raised to the hope
of a better home on high by its splendid revela-
tions... what though there be these and other inequalities in the distribution of God's gifts and blessings? still say not, with God there is any respect of persons; all this may be, yet He may be, in the strictest sense of the word impartial in his dealings. For he requires no more than what he has given the power to perform, of the smile of his eternal favour will rest not on these who have possessed the largest means, but on those who have done best with the means they had. He will not expect the same fruits to grow on the rocky barren soil, as on that which has been enriched with the dews of warmed by the sun of heaven. He will not look to find the same virtues of graces in the benighted heart of the savage, as in the soul of the enlightened man; he will not reap where he has not sown. nor gather where he has not sown; therefore he is not partial; therefore he has no respect to persons. Let us ever keep in mind this principle, that God will not demand the same results from these whose means have been very off
fertent, & we shall then no longer feel the weight of any objection to the purest perfect impartiality of God. Why should we murmur, because there is so great a variety in the external gifts of providence, some seem to be so much more highly favored than others... both where you will, variety seems to be the law by which God governs the world. It is in nature. From the one end of the earth to the other... from the regions of burning heat, from the rock-bound, then best beaten there to that which is ever gay with due fertility, there is every variety of climate and soil. The earth now swells into lofty mountains, then sinks into valleys... then vast is the variety of animals. from the minutest insect that crawls to the majestic tenant of the forest, that roams on its surface. every where there is gradation of difference, succession of variety, blessings imparted in different degrees & gifts conferred in every manner... still we believe that all this is a part of the arrangements of infinite wisdom & goodness... instead of indicating weakness, caution, or partiality on the part...
of the great Giver, is designed to answer, will answer, the best and most beneficent purposes. There are doubts less the wisest reasons, why there should be respect a variety in the endowments and advantages of men’s impartiality is displayed, not in bestowing on all the same gifts, but in judging all by the exercising principles of equity, not in granting to every one the same means, but in requiring use of improvement, corresponding to the means, whatever they may be. This is the grand essential principle of the divine impartiality, the rock on which rests our confidence, that the Judge of all the earth will do right; the foundation of our belief that God will measure his requisitions by our means, of our fearful certainty, that he will require all that he has given us the power to do.

Such is the doctrine of the divine impartiality. We will now proceed to draw a few practical reflections from the subject.

1. This truth, that G. is no respecter of persons, prin
is the most elevating, attractive views of the government of God, of the condition of man; we ought to love God, have man the better for it. We see that it is no dark, vindictive, arbitrary government that exercises over us; but the reign of mercy, justice combined, the reign of love, designed for the highest good of the endless welfare of its objects. Suppose that the reverse were the case; represent to yourself in imagination a Deity partial, capricious, revengeful, receiving a part of his children to the arms of this love, shutting out others to leave remediless woe, without any reason, but his own good will and pleasure: could you have such a Being? It's impossible. I care not what lectures you may read to me on the sovereignty of God, his right to do what he will with his own. I say, such a being could not be loved, ought not to be loved. Man is not to be constituted as to have it in his power to fix his affections and reverence on such a Being. Thanks be to the infinite revelation he is not required to do it... Our God is no reject
es of persons. He gives us an mercy whatever means He sees to be best, and then demands of us the diligent, raise improvement of them. This is love, if this is justice: therefore we venerate love our God. Besides, this doctrine affords no less delightful, variable views of our fellow men. We, like all as we, are the children of God. Blessed by this care provided for in his beneficent arrangements; no matter what the difference of nation, of country, of rank, or condition, may be, they ascribe the same faith in heaven, that we have, for God is no respecter of persons. We are bound to love our brethren of the human family, for God loves them, we are bound to treat them with kindness and equity, for so God treats them. Every instance of oppression is not only an outrage upon man, but an insult to that God, who respects not the persons of men who will tread in the dust. The proud fool that lifts himself above his fellows only to wrong, and them.

2. The doctrine of my text is a stern
rebuke to that spirit of bigotry, which has so often marred and disfigured our beautiful and bless'd religion. When men draw their boundary lines of party; I tell you, that salvation lies within & hopeless condemnation without their enclosure, they merely forget that God is no respecter of persons. That all the useless & mysterious things about which are arranged, & divide, that different sects are of no account in His sight, that He beholds in the heart a bountiful respect only to the great & everlasting principles of moral purity & spiritual excellence, He will gather His saints to glory & blessedness from every sect & every religious name under heaven. We are spending our days in disputations & ceremonies; in defiance of mutual censure. Our hearts meanwhile are going into the presence of God unanctified & unprepared. Oh! then, shall men have largeness of soul enough to have others none the less fit differing from them! to think there may be true & faithful children of God under the shade of every variety of faith & prin-
...to travel on peacefully & kindly together the road to our common home. There will doubtless be rewards in heaven: men will wander here some people get there, whom they long since in their own minds banished from the favour of God. How patiently poor must all this contention all this bitterness, all this exclusive feeling appear in the right of that God, who has made us all & taught us all to strive to his favour, as to the prize of our high calling.

3. One other reflection I deduce from the doctrine of my text is, the high obligation, and so as actions are held, to strenuous improvement. If God in no respect of person, our being born in another land, or professing the same faith, as that is all we have to them, will do us no good. In proportion as our means & privileges are greater, our duty is wider; so our accountability more odious. Give pity there, she are bound slaves to the form of some talk, stemming superstition, who have scarcely a dim spec impression of any religious truth. Be it our care that...
they do not put his to shame hereafter in our personal account. As it is, he is no better than a heathen, is a great deal worse, because he has far better advantages of ours against light and knowledge. We can never set up the peace of righteousness for the day spring from on high hath visited us to give light to those who sit in darkness, the shadow of death to guide our feet in the way of peace. It would be well, if in some cases men had as much zeal for being good to others, as they have for converting the heathen to try. We talk of the darkness of the poor, Hindoos, of the idolatries of the inhabitants of the isles of the sea: but have we no compassion for those in the midst of us, who are daily slighting the precious grace of God, who in defiance of the warnings of the invocations of grace are selling themselves under captivity to sin, and marching rapidly on to the grave without a single qualification of heart for enjoying the goodness of God hereafter? O sirs, shall we forget the deep
personal interest, where we have in the great task
of improvement in the divine life? Never may it
be said, that our very privileges are our condemna
tion, or that our sin is greater as our light is more.
O'er, before whom we must all shortly appear, may
we so improve under thy tuition, that, whosoever
shall come from the east, or from the west, from the
north, or from the south, shall sit down together in thine
kingdom. it may not be our shame, that "light has come to
me."

Such, my soul, is the truth of my text. Such the
instruction which it furnishes. I can only remark, by
way of conclusion, how finely we are taught the
value of purity of heart, of moral and spiritual excellence.
To all other things God will have no respect, but
the circumstances of distinction, in which we value
ourselves now, will hereafter drop from us, as the old
dress of the soul will be the dress of character. Follow
therefore after righteousness, for this alone can never perish
by this alone shall any man see the Lord."

June 1823.

At Rome, June 15th, 1823 - forenoon.
At Duxbury, July 20th, 1823 - afternoon.
At Spring St. Roxbury, Aug. 3rd, 1823 - forenoon.
At Harvard, Sept. 14th, 1825—afternoon.
At Lexington, Jan. 22d, 1826—forenoon.
At Wattham (Mr. Whitman’s) May 7, 1826—afternoon.
At home, July 19, 1829—forenoon.