No. 181.

Men to be judged according to their means opportunities...
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Men to be judged according to their means of opportunities.
Romans II, 12. "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law."

From this passage, I propose to deduce an important general principle, that may be turned to a good moral account. The ch. from which the words are taken is one, in which Paul addresses the Jews in a style of severe and pregnant reproof. He tells them that they are as inexcusable as the Gentiles whom they condemned; since though they had a law, or what they deemed to be a revelation from God, they had no better obeyed its injunctions, no better imbibed its spirit, than they were destitute of such a privilege. He teaches them that God is no respecter of persons; or, then in the passage of my text, that retribution will be awarded to men in proportion to the means they enjoy. "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law;" i.e. the Gentiles, who have had no revealed light of God, who yet have sinned as far astray from the path of right understanding the
means they had from the light of nature of knowing and doing better, shall suffer the evil consequences, though they were not favored with a special revelation. And as many as have sinned in the land shall be judged by the law; i.e., the Jews who have had superior light and knowledge imparted to them, must of course act accordingly, as their condemnation will be the more severe. They shall be judged according to their advantages as they have. Much is bestowed, much will be required.

Now, my dear, from this passage taken in its connexion, Dr. White has the following great and general principle:--that all men will be judged according to their opportunities, means, or privileges. And this he considers as a main of essential principle in the government exercised over us by God. But simple simplicity as it is, it is usually overlooked or forgotten in the estimate we make of the duties and expectations of man. We too often speak and think, as if every individual in the world were to be judged by one rule, without the least reference to variety of circumstances, opportunities, or advantages;--one general standard, by which all are to be tried, to perish or be saved.

Nothing can be more unreasonable or unscriptural than this view. Our Saviour has established a very different principle, when he tells us, that of those to whom much is
given, much will be required... And we ourselves ev-
day proceed upon this principle, in our judgment of the
character or merits of our fellow men. We do not expect the
same things of all, nor do we try all by the same cri-
terion. We make allowance for peculiarities of circum-
stances or situation. It is true, with regard to human
tribunals of justice, there may be some imperfection in
this respect. Laws cannot have respect to minutes
in every varying circumstances. They must be grounded on
general principles, or provide punishment for overt acts. They
cannot set up one standard for one man, or a different
one for another man, according to the difference of their
condition. The criminal, the trembling of saints under his
sentence at the bar of legal justice, did we know the
secret history of his mind, the course of life or the cir-
cumstances in which he has been cast, might excite our
better feelings in his behalf, if we should be disposed to
extend, if not to pardon. But the law can acknowled-
edge no such exceptions or considerations; it must try all
by one unvarying standard; and hence the decisions of a court
of justice are often different from what what would
be the decisions of the court of conscience... But this is
owing to the weakness & imperfection of man, who cannot
adapt his laws to any objects, but outward actions. But no such imperfections can have place with regard to the Great Ruler of the universe... His eye is upon our hearts, and secret, mysterious power by whose real characters have been formed, the circumstances which have thrown a darker shade upon affections, views, and conduct, are all thoroughly known to him. Of course, He will judge men, not by an arbitrary, unvarying standard, but by a reference to the different influences to which they have been exposed, and perhaps have made them better or worse, without much choice of the will on their part. Who can for a moment suppose, that an omniscient, infinitely just, God will require the same of all the immense variety of beings, who fill the earth, diverse, pied in every possible way, as their situations, advantages are? You might as rationally expect, that the soil of the earth should yield the same productions, notwithstanding every variety of climate: that the fragrant fruits and fair sports of the gardens of the south should be found blooming, ripening amidst the mountains of ice; the cold blasts of the north: you might as well expect to see, on our rock bound by wave beaten by the same verdure of fertility, as a smile on the evening
banks of some gentle stream, that winds its way among the abodes of plenty and industry. There are marked striking varieties in the capacities and advantages of the different orders of mankind. As different individuals, so

shaped as striking as the varieties of local situation in the globe are inhabited. The rocky, barren wilderness, the desertion holds an eternal empire, is not more different from that plain, where blossoms are starting forth in every side, vineyards are bending beneath their rich fruitful weight, than is the untutored savage who roams the forest disputes the possession of all, with

more fierce than himself. From the en

trusted, refined, and cultured man, dwelling in the midst of the institutions and improvements of civilized society.

If there are great differences of genus and means, there must be great differences of requirements of character. Consequently, as every principle of reason and scripture tells us, there must be a difference in the

judgment passed at the great day.

Let us apply this principle to some of the diversities that mark the condition of the world.

Consider the striking differences, as the means of moral and religious improvement, among the different parts of the
world; you will be convinced that the same cannot be expected or required of all by the Omniscient Judge. They who from their very situation & education, are doomed to the most wild & fantastic notions of God & eternity, will doubtless be forgiven, though their religious ideas should not be so pure & improving;--while those who have dwelt in the broad light of day, have been taught from childhood to entertain the most spiritual & exalted ideas of God, & of the duty & work of man, & of the destiny & endowments we--will find their condemnation the greater, if with these advantages they have not improved the more.--The hardy greenlander believes that his disembodied spirit must day after day clamberough mountains of ice, & thus be tortured & harassed in reaching its destination:--his notion of heaven is made up of goyens of perpetual summer, an endless day of sunshine without clouds, & an abundance of fish, rein-deer, & his beloved seals.--The Hindoo multiplies his deities, till he himself can no longer count them; & numbers, nor can he disgrace himself with the foolish licentious services on he renders them. He finally be
lives the waters of the Ganges to be purified by washing, therefore his religion is washing. He can think there is
merit in laying down a being created to death under the chariot wheels of a barbarous god; if women can think that this is their highest duty to mount the funeral pyre and perish in the flames. The inhabitants of the Isles of the ocean bow to senseless stocks and stones, so it makes one almost weep to see the things they worship. These gods are the images of the Chinese, who tell you what is the character of their worship, notwithstanding the fine morality of their great philosophers and statesmen. And if you turn to the Japanese, though the emperor, under whose banner they are ranked, stile from the same excellent crew, interweave them with the crutches of their own imagination, yet his standard is only a tree growing high, of his heaven was gross to persons. And even when we come within the boundary lines ofExtent, still wide differences are apparent. False reverence, folly, or passion of men have so abused that holy religion, it became dense from heaven, that in many places you can no longer discern its angel robes, its emanence beaming with light of glory. Among these, there are those, to whom their religion comes with almost one of its purifying moral power, over whose sky onation has spread a weightful cloud. There are those, who
think their religion is finished, when they have covered themselves with holy water, bowed before images and sacrifices, and said their prayers in a language they do not understand, and paid servile homage to spiritual tyrants. And some there are, whose views of God and man are darkened and distorted by a false theology, who attribute to the Deity the passions and weaknesses of man, thus robbing their religion of its amiable spirit, of its efficacious power upon the best feelings of the heart. Take the world together, but a small part of it, comparatively are even nominally Christians; of that small part, but few receive any in its purity, fervor, and holiness.

My object in presenting this brief sketch is to inculcate upon you, that beings, whose religious means and privileges are so various, cannot in any principle of justice be judged by the same standard. From those, who are educated in the darkness of ignorance, superstition, and fanaticism, so that almost inevitably bound to erroneous views, the same purity and elevation cannot be expected as required, as from those to whom large, refined, and noble ideas on the subject of religion are imparted. Not so much will be required of the heathen or savage, as of the tyrant; not so much of the degraded and blinded heir, as of the rational, enlightened man. This
representation seems to carry the recommendation of truth that it, but representations very diverse from this are common. We are told that heathen nations are entirely without the shadow of God's favor; minute calculations are made of them, as if they may be supposed to be to be extinguished by destruction. Now this estimate evidently supposes, that God requires of them what he has not given them the power to perform, that they are to be condemned for not being free when they could not be free. But I believe that the conversions heathen, who makes the most of the light he has, is far more acceptable to God, than the wicked man, who dwells in a heathen country, and calls himself a free. I believe this, among other reasons, because an after the has declared that in every nation, &c. Let there no such claims be made on compassion to call forth excitements, that generally waste themselves ineffectually. I believe, that every member of the human family, be he Jew or Gentile, kindness such as you will find the mercy of God, just in propor-
tion as they accord the light of capacities of privileges on the more light than was ever bestowed upon him. Let him remember that upon them devolves a more solemn obligation to high and strenuous improvements, because upon them more
has been bestowed, and instead of estimating how many of their
disbelieved brethren of the human family are going continually
to destruction, let them see to it, that they be faithful
fulfill the ten talents committed to them. I do not lie
down in odors at last.

2. Apply this principle to the different advantages of different ages of the world. Its truth will be still more manifest. Take two remote periods remote from each other, compare them with regard to their religious, moral, and general means of improvement; you will scarcely find two distinctions more different than they. He, who traces the history of religion, or the progress of refinement, among mankind, particularly among states, will be convinced that their opportunities have been almost infinitely diversified, consequentially that the standard by which they will be judged will be diversified too. Let any one look at those times, when (as a scripture figure) darkness covered the earth, and darkness the people; then look at our own times of light of improvement. Say whether we are not under the high obligation to foster more than those who were planted in a more unfriendly soil. Much as we are disposed to complain of the present day, the fact, no one, I believe, will deny that at this age there is more light, a better spirit on religious subjects, than the
has been at any preceding age. And it would be strange indeed if it were not so. The present times have received the accumulated wisdom and experience of former times, and added to these yet new and brighter improvements, to be handed down to the next generation. Many of the truths, which are now so simple that they are taught in our schools engraven on the minds of children, were slowly gathered in the progress of ages, at the expense of much labor and pain, after many mistakes and failures. Perhaps what seems at present as profound and surprising discoveries may hereafter be regarded as the elements of knowledge. There is a treasury of acquisitions into which each age throws something, though it be but a mite. Now while this progress has confessedly been going on with regard to other subjects, is it possible that religious light and knowledge have been standing still? No, it has not been, or it could not be. The work of the reformation has been advancing, ever since those days, when Luther and his friends stepped forth to commence it, and it is now far from being complete. There has been a constant accession of knowledge on religious subjects, new sources of information have been opened, explored, light has gushed in as soon as the obstacles which intercepted it were removed. Better principles of interpretation of Scripture.
been proposed & received the approbation of sound & discriminating minds among all parties; principles, which have overthrown the darkness that had rested on some parts of the sacred writings, relieved them from these apparent absurdities, which had distorted rational men, restored them to the pure & beautiful light of their original condition. And what is still more advantageous, a better spirit has been introduced into the management of religious subjects, more freedom, reason, & plainness. The dark &-prevailing ignorance of bigotry is not so often seen; or if seen, it is harmless. Men think freely & speak freely on religious subjects, as well as on others; there are no whipps, dungeons, gogmies, so to terrify or to silence. And the different sects have learnt to treat each other with more kindness & respect as they become better acquainted with each other. The essentials of religion are diminished, instead of being multiplied. Men have learnt that a good life is more consistent with all the varieties of true religion. In fact, when we reflect from what a yoke of priestcraft, superstition, religious tyranny we are delivered, what a difference there is in all that regards habits of thinking on religious subjects between three centuries ago & the present time, we must thank G. that we are cast in so happy an age.
But at the same time, that we thank God for this blessing, we may not forget, that our duties are proportionally increased; if our age has more advantages, it likewise imposes higher, more solemn obligations. The more light, the more purity we should have; the better knowledge, the better practice. When we look back on these times, when the human mind was in bondage to ignorance, superstition, when the word of God was disfigured by the most distorted and perverse interpretations, all the beauty of its meaning lost under the heavy incumbrance of theological systems, when plain declarations of Scripture were wrested to the support of monstrous tenets; let men believe what they were taught to believe, no matter how inconsistent, to their reason, how dishonorable to God, how degrading to man; when, I say, we look back to such times, let us bear it constantly in mind, that much less will be required of those, who are placed in such unhappy circumstances, than of us... If they in honesty of heart acted according to the best light, and they had the imperfect as it was, they will doubtless be accepted; our light is purer, clearer, our knowledge more ample, our circumstances more happy, our opportunities more numerous, favorable; if we are not better and wiser than, if we have
out more of the spirit of our Master, it will be to our blame 
and condemnation.

3. We may apply this principle to the differences in the situ-
tuations of men, as they exist together in society, at the 
same period, in the same community. These varieties are very 
great, even among those who appear most similar. Notwomen 
perhaps can be said to have passed through the same influ-
ences, or to have been educated in the same way. From that 
appearance they may be so, but there is a secret education of the 
heart, mind constantly going on, of which others know nothing, 
or of which the person himself is perhaps unconscious. This it is, 
that occasions such striking differences, where the means of 
education, the kind of influences, seem to have been the 
same. But the influences, as from men's characters, are 
very often more deep and lasting - we cannot trace the manner 
in which their hearts have been affected, their tastes acquired, 
their dispositions moulded. Some men are more virtuous than 
theirs, only because they have had fewer temptations to vice; 
many a man becomes depraved, reckless, desperate, who, had 
the circumstances of his life been different, had his condition 
of moral improvement been more favorable, might have stood 
among men of honor and integrity. When we look upon men 
who are ashes for their vices, we should ever bear it in
mind, that very possibly had we been placed in this situation, we might have been worse than they. Don't can by any remark of this kind (to extirpate the guilt) to diminish our abhorrence of vice, but merely to say, that the outward actions of a man's life are not perhaps the standard altogether by which he will be tried. Let us suppose the case of two men who have passed through very different courses: the one has been nurtured under the best and happiest influences, who has had good principles continually instilled into him, has dwelt beneath the sight of a good example, from childhood has been exempt from strong and mastering temptations, who in consequence of all this has become virtuous and happy: the other has been educated from early years in all the degrading effects of bad principles and bad habits, has been taught to despise religion, all serious and good things, as even any indications of good appeared in him, they were crush

down by the ridicule of guilty companions, who has been placed in situations where temptation had peculiar chances, where there was every thing to degrade and ruin; who in consequence of all this, has become abandoned. Now think you, that the Deity will have no regard to the different conditions in which these
two men have been placed, while the one has had every thing to favour his virtue, & the other nothing, shall they be judged without any reference to this circumstance? Doubtless the All wise Being will judge men not only according to the character of habits they have formed, but also with reference to the circumstances & influences in which they have been formed. And hence doubtless the future world will not consist merely of two opposite states of unmingled reward, the other of unmingled punishment, but there will be various grades of condition between these, suited to the variety of characters, with their various hues & shades; & the circumstances in which they have been acquired. This view of mankind should excite in our breasts the strongest commiseration for the wretched beings whom we abhor these vices, which must make them wretched. When we reflect, that perhaps a single circumstance happening different by mere childhood, or single bias given to the mind or affections in early life by some untoward event, might have made us as bad as they are, we shall tremble, while we rejoice for ourselves, & pity, sincerely pity those who have passed their days under dark & deadly influences. Many a stream is tainted at its fountain, this carries through its whole course a turbid pension
in, & last for that taint might have disappeared in 

purity of freshness, imparting & receiving beauty, as it mu.

the man, these ories have made him a publick spec-

icle, — at whom the finger of scorn is pointed, — who stands 

on a blot upon society, — shunned by all, detested by all,

for he should not be excluded from our compassion; for 

would we but trace the line of influence of temptation 

through all his heart & mind have been, but as the 

formful world has never seen, — we should feel, that 

there was much to excite the tears of pity, as well as the 

burn of indignation, — should think, that he had been 

from similar influences & trials.

My fi. after this imperfect view of the subject, can 

not remind you of the strong light, in wh it sets our du-

ties & obligations. We live in an age, wh abounds in an un-

equal degree in the means of virtue & excellence. It 

cures then to see that these advantages be not spent 

him as in vain. Had we been born nurtured among 

the deluded worshippers of idols, or the fierce savages of 

the wilderness, or under the reign of superstition, had we 

been deluded & misled on religious objects, ever since 

or first began to think of them, there might become
Excuse for ignorance & indifference, hardness of heart. But with us, it is not so. We have dwelt in the full beam of the sun, in all its purity; all the opportunities & facilities for doing good are around us in abundance. If the language of our Saviour then, be true: “if ye knew these things... The age & circumstances in which we live, are peculiarly favorable to moral improvement; let us not be wanting on our part. Indeed, at the great day it will appear that many, who have enjoyed fewer means of opportunities, have done much better than we. To the thing she has improved what he has, the promise is made that it shall be given unto him & shall have more abundance & prosperity. May this promise be ours!

Feb'r 21st, 1825.

At Waltham, Feb' 23d, 1825 - afternoon.
At Waltham, Sept. 7th, 1825 - afternoon.
At Miss. Frothingham's (Boston), Nov. 7th, 1825 - forenoon.
At Miss. Gray's (Back Bay), May 23d, 1824 - forenoon.
At Lynn, July 24th, 1824 - forenoon.
At Mr. Walker, Aug. 8th, 1824 - afternoon.
At Lynn, Sept. 26th, 1824 - afternoon.
At Mr. Peabody, Dec. 12th, 1824 - forenoon.
At Dr. Harris (Buckley), May 22d, 1825 - forenoon.
At Bedham (Miss. Adams), June 12th, 1825 - forenoon.
At Beavil, St. Botolph, July 22d, 1825 - forenoon.
At Baltimore, Sept. 10th, 1826 - afternoon.