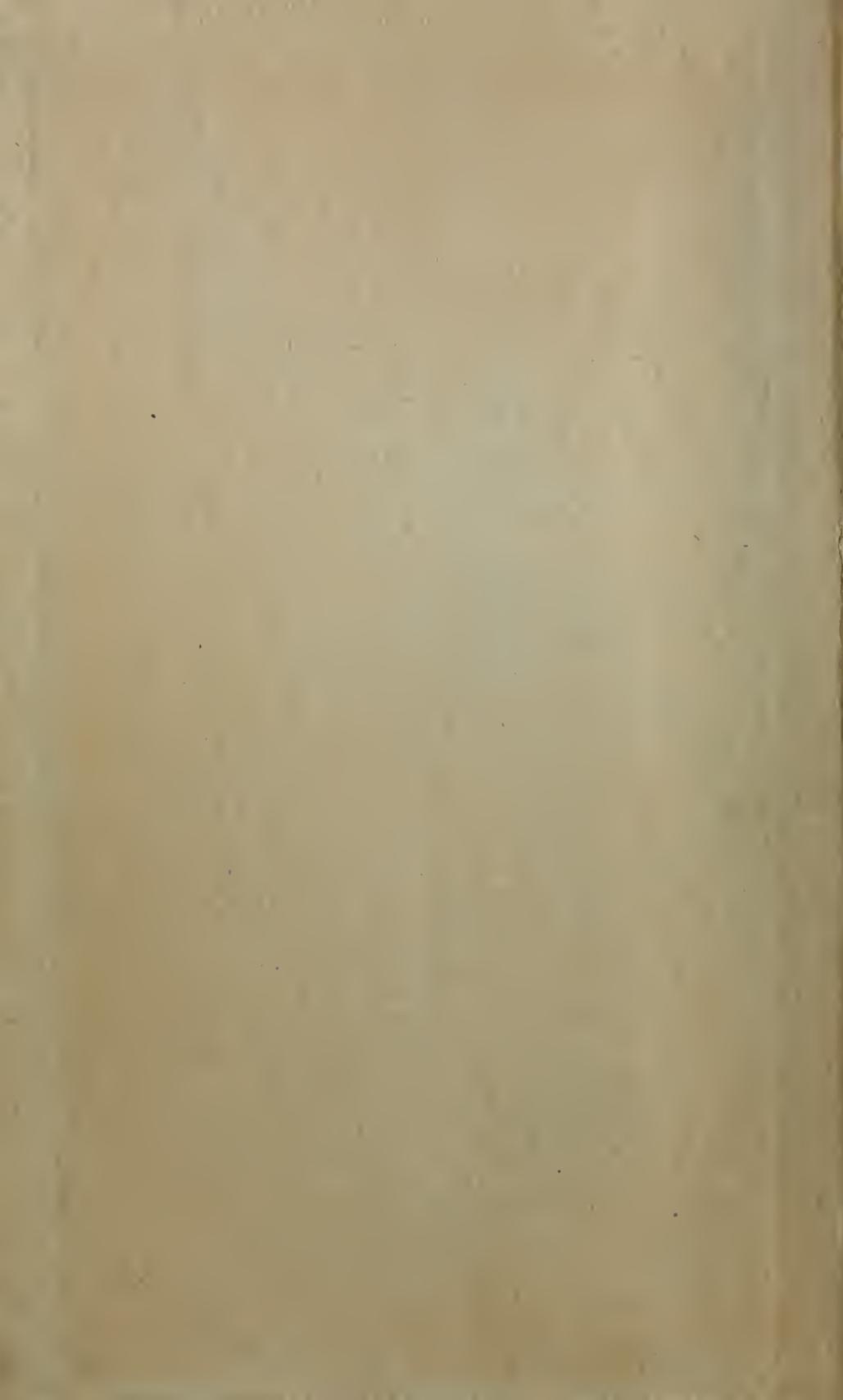


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R. HILL, A.M.

H. MELVILLE, A.M.

C. SIMEON, A.M.

A. THOMSON, D.D.

R. WATSON

J. B. Longacre Sc.

ENGLISH PORT



THE  
**BRITISH PULPIT:**

CONSISTING OF

DISCOURSES BY THE MOST EMINENT LIVING DIVINES,

IN

ENGLAND, SCOTLAND, AND IRELAND:

ACCOMPANIED WITH

**PULPIT SKETCHES:**

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

SCRIPTURAL ILLUSTRATIONS; AND SELECTIONS ON THE OFFICE, DUTIES,  
AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

BY THE

**REV. W. SUDDARDS,**  
RECTOR OF GRACE CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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IN presenting to the public the second volume of the *British Pulpit*, the editor avails himself of the opportunity thus afforded of expressing his thanks for the patronage given to the former volume, of which nearly two thousand copies have been sold within six months.

The prevailing literature of the present day is evidently of a light and ephemeral character. The teeming thousands of novels and romances which float through the length and breadth of the land, plainly demonstrate that a taste has been created for a species of reading calculated rather to amuse the fancy than to improve the heart; to inflame the passions, than correct the life. It is true, that efforts are made for the improvement of our widely scattered and rapidly increasing population; for the lessening of their miseries, and the augmentation of their happiness. But even some of these are of a defective character; for it unfortunately happens that many are anticipating certain results from causes altogether inadequate to their production. Their hearts glow with impassioned ardour, as they enlarge with enthusiastic animation upon the influence of civil liberty, improvements in political economy, beneficent laws, diffused philosophy, and wisely formed plans of education: but with the destiny of man in a future state of existence, they meddle not, while his responsibility to God as a moral agent gives them no concern. Thus they reach not the moral part of his nature, and consequently leave him with wants which neither philosophy, laws, science, liberty, knowledge, or education, can possibly supply. This supply can only be found in an acquaintance with, and appreciation of, those heaven-inspired truths of revealed religion which direct not only to the disease and desolation of our fallen nature, but to that blessed Redeemer who is mighty and willing to save. Legislative enactments will not make us benevolent; the principles of political economy will send forth from our hearts no steady flow of generous feeling to our fellow beings; neither will a knowledge of chemistry or mechanism curb the unruly passions, or correct the vicious practices of wicked, unprincipled men. To reach these, we must avail ourselves of the instructions of that record which reveals the covenant of God as a resting place for the soul; which makes known Jesus Christ as the atonement for sin; and spreads before the eye a bright and beauteous heaven as the Christian's final and glorious home. These truths alone are sufficient to grapple with the miseries and vices of our world; and, under the sanctifying power of their Author, regenerate and save the nations of the earth. For while all other efforts shall prove abortive, yet, under the reign of the Prince of Zion, and amidst the diffusion of the principles and power of his gospel, domestic affection, public virtue, and universal peace, shall be enjoyed by the nations of

our earth. "All nations shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him Blessed." The signs of the times seem to indicate the dawn of that auspicious day. The almost universal peace at present prevailing among the nations of the earth is affording facilities for translating into every language, and circulating through every region, that blessed volume which "liveth and abideth for ever." Travellers are exploring every land, commerce is extending to every people, our ships are touching upon every shore; and a way is thus opened for sending forth the missionary of the cross to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. And we rejoice that the Christian church, experiencing a revival of religion greater and wider than that which accomplished the reformation of the sixteenth century, is putting on her beautiful garments and going forth into the strong holds of idolatry, to publish among perishing millions the unsearchable riches of Christ. The prediction of Daniel is receiving its accomplishment: "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." And we trust the time will speedily arrive when their sound shall go through all the earth; when the animosity of parties in the church shall only be seen on the dark page of a past history; and when there shall be but "one fold," as there is but "one Shepherd;" and Jesus Christ shall be all in all, the theme of every tongue, the joy of every heart. Hasten it, Lord God Almighty! Thy people in all lands say, Amen.

Among the means instituted by God for the accomplishment of this great and glorious result, is found that of a living ministry, established for the proclamation of that plan of redeeming mercy which is made known in the oracles of divine truth. And it must be a source of joy to the Christian, that God is raising up in all Christian lands, and in some heathen countries where the missionary has unfurled the banners of the cross, men who, like Barnabas and Paul, are willing to hazard their lives for the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. A large portion of these worthies, during the last three hundred years, have been found in Great Britain; and it has been well observed by a reviewer of the first volume of the *British Pulpit*, that

"England is the home, the bulwark of Protestantism; the champion of Bible light and knowledge; and amidst all her agitations, she is a Christian land; hers is a Christian people; nowhere on earth, in modern times, has the gospel been more successful; nowhere has the cross of Christ been better held up as the power of God for the salvation of men. Are not these reasons why British preachers are interesting to us on this side of the water? We hear of them; we read the works of some of them; but we wish to know how they preach in their ordinary, regular, parochial work, that we may see what kind of sermons people hear in England, and what kind of preaching it is, which in that country is carrying on the cause of Christ."

It will be the earnest desire of the editor of the *British Pulpit* to meet these wishes, and to spread on the pages of the successive volumes of the work, sermons by men of every name, who preach not themselves but Christ Jesus the Lord.

The portraits accompanying the volume are said to be excellent likenesses of the men they picture to the eye. It is scarcely necessary to say that they are among the choice spirits of our age; men of sterling worth, whose praise is known in all the churches.

The Rev. ROWLAND HILL was born at Hawkstone, Shropshire, August 23, 1745. He was educated at St. John's College, Cambridge, where, after attending to the regular course of study, he took a degree as Master of Arts. In consequence of certain irregularities in lay preaching and other matters, it was with considerable difficulty he received ordination; and such at that period was deemed the excess and extravagance of his zeal, that many of the churches were closed against him. In 1772, he laid the foundation stone of Surrey Chapel, which, when completed, became the scene of his untiring labours until the close of his life, in April, 1833, at the advanced age of eighty-nine years; having toiled in the service of his Master for more than sixty years. Whatever were the peculiar eccentricities or errors of Rowland Hill, there can be no doubt of his exertions in the cause of Christ having been crowned with great success. He came into public life when England was passing through a dark night; or rather, when she was feeling the dawn of returning day. The opposing elements kept up a long and severe conflict; and during this period, Rowland Hill was found faithful to his post in the battle field, preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ; occasionally itinerating through dark districts of country, braving the noontide summer's heat and winter's piercing cold, as also the sneers and opposition of wicked men, that he might bring perishing sinners to a knowledge of the truth. He was a warm supporter of all the benevolent and religious societies of the age: and after a life of toil and consecration to God on earth, he is no doubt now reaping a rich reward in heaven.

The Rev. H. MELVILLE, A.M., minister of Camden Chapel, Camberwell, is one of the most popular Episcopal ministers in the British dominions; and if a highly intelligent, faithful, fearless, and impressive announcement of divine truth is well calculated to secure popularity of the best kind for the minister of the gospel, then does Mr. Melville put forth his energies to obtain it. As a preacher, he is always masculine, and frequently vehement: many of his sentences are unusually brilliant; and his powerful appeals are admirably adapted to move the conscience and impress the heart. Placed in the vicinity of London, he occupies a position of vast importance and influence; and the overflowing congregations to which he ministers, both in his own parish and elsewhere, give proof of the estimation in which he is held. May he long continue a burning and a shining light.

Dr. ANDREW THOMSON was born July 11, 1779. In 1802 he was set apart to the work of the ministry; and in consequence of the strong and fearless part which he took in the councils of the Presbyterian Kirk of Scotland, he has been generally designated the "lion of the Scotch church." As a preacher, Dr. Thomson was decidedly evangelical; but his sermons were chiefly of a practical nature; he rarely entered into abstruse speculations, or bewildered his hearers with philosophical perplexities. As a theologian, said Dr. Chalmers, in a funeral sermon preached on the occasion of his death, he was of the olden theology of Scotland. As a controversialist in the affairs of the church to which he belonged, and the party whose cause he espoused, he displayed unrivalled talents, as a public speaker; and a firmness of nerve which neither opposition nor overwhelming majorities could move. In private life, he is said to have been every thing that is amiable and engaging; tender in his affections, warm in his friendships. His pulpit oratory was distinguished by a nervous vigour which never lost its power; while a faithful discharge of pastoral duties endeared him to the people of his charge. But the prophets do not live for ever: on the 9th of February, 1831, he returned home from the Presbytery, apparently in excellent health, in company with some of his friends, from whom he parted at his own door: he was not, however, permitted to cross the threshold alive; the hand of death arrested him; he fell to the ground in a state of insensibility, and never spoke again. Medical aid was immediately procured, but all in vain; the vital spark had fled; the parish of St. George's was bereaved of its pastor; the kirk of Scotland, of one of its ablest defenders; the British and Foreign Bible Society, of a warm and able supporter; and the oppressed of every land, of an ardent and devoted advocate. This unlooked-for event caused the city of Edinburgh to be clothed in mourning; and men of every creed showed their esteem of the man, and their respect for the minister, by crowding in thousands, as his body was conveyed to the place of sepulture.

The Rev. RICHARD WATSON was a minister in the Wesleyan Methodist Society, and certainly was one of the brightest ornaments of that distinguished body. To a

power of intellect and grasp of mind which fall to the lot of few men, Mr. Watson added the riches of theological literature, and the embellishments of a chaste and sterling eloquence. His tall figure; his long, thin face; his high, overarched forehead, bearing the traces of deep reflection; together with his chaste, simple, and appropriate action, gave additional force to his clear and solemn announcements of divine truth. His Theological Institutes stand deservedly high, as a work of great research, and give abundant evidence of his talents, under the influence of genuine piety, being consecrated to the service of pure religion. He had a supreme regard for the word of God, and was strongly opposed to extravagant speculations on religious subjects. After quoting, in one of his controversial pamphlets, an objection to what he deemed an important truth respecting the divine essence, and expressing his conviction of the metaphysical soundness of his argument, he exclaims, "But a truce to these reasonings; I willingly give them all up for a single word of the testimony of God; I affect them not; they seem to bring me irreverently too near to God: I would not break through and gaze. While I write, I feel how just, and yet how reproving, are the words of the poet of Paradise:

Dark with excessive light thy skirts appear,  
Yet dazzle heaven, that brightest seraphim  
Approach not, but with both wings veil their eyes."

During the sickness which terminated his honourable and useful career, he displayed the patient spirit of the Christian waiting for the coming of his Lord. He had a strong attachment to the forms of the Established Church, and when debarred from the public ordinances of religion, used them in his family, not omitting the Psalms, the Epistles, or the collect for the day. He would frequently say, "Read to me the *Te Deum*; I am very fond of that when I cannot go out on the Sabbath, because it seems to unite me in spirit with the whole catholic church on earth and in heaven."

The sting of death appeared to be removed; and feeling his entire dependence upon Christ, he looked at the valley of death as the pathway of life. To a friend he remarked, that for some time he had a desire to live a few years longer, that he might accomplish some matters that he thought might be useful; "but now," said he, "the desire of it is taken away." He then spoke of his unworthiness, and of his firm reliance on the atonement of Christ, and said,—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On thy kind arms I fall;  
Be thou my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus, and my all."

On the 8th of January, 1833, without any apparent pain or convulsive struggle, this eminent Christian minister departed this life, in the fifty-second year of his age, in the joyful hope of a glorious immortality.

REV. CHARLES SIMEON.—This eminent clergyman of the Church of England presents an instance of how much good the inventive genius and ardent spirit of real piety may accomplish in a comparatively private station. He was born the heir of a considerable estate; and has resided from his youth—first as a scholar, and then as a fellow—at the university of Cambridge. Having early attained a spiritual knowledge of the truth, he has devoted his life and influence and wealth to the promotion of the principles of evangelical piety in the English Church. He has now attained the age of near fourscore years; and for more than half a century has occupied the ground on which he still stands, testifying to small and great the great principles of the gospel of the Lord Jesus. When he first commenced his efforts as a preacher in Cambridge, it was in the face of much reproach, for what appeared to many to be new doctrines in the church. But under the blessing of God, he has seen these holy doctrines spreading their influence around him, until a very large portion of the clergy of the Established Church are united with him; not a few of whom have been influenced in their course by him, in preaching the same faith which was once destroyed. The influence of Mr. Simeon upon young men in the university preparing for orders, has been very great and useful. Many such look up to him as to a father in the Lord, and have reason to bless God for having stationed him thus, as it were, "a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord."

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THE  
BRITISH PULPIT.

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SERMON I.

THE POWER OF WICKEDNESS AND RIGHTEOUSNESS TO RE-PRODUCE  
THEMSELVES.

BY THE REV. H. MELVILL, M.A.

LATE FELLOW AND TUTOR OF ST. PETER'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, AND MINISTER OF  
CAMDEN CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL.

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*"For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."*—Gal. vi. 7.

You may be all aware that what is termed the argument from analogy has been carried out to great length by thinking men, and that much of the strongest witness for Christianity has been won on this field of investigation. It is altogether a most curious and profitable inquiry, which sets itself to the tracing out resemblances between natural things and spiritual; and which thus proposes to establish, at the least, a probability that creation and Christianity have one and the same author. And we think that we shall not overstep the limits of truth, if we declare that nature wears the appearance of having been actually designed for the illustration of the Bible. We believe that he who, with a devout mind, searches most diligently into the beauties and mysteries of the material world, will find himself met constantly by exhibitions which seem to him the pages of scripture written in the stars, and the forests, and the waters of this creation. There is such a sameness of dealing characteristic of the natural and the spiritual, that the Bible may be read in the outspread of the landscape, and the operations of agricul-

ture; whilst conversely the laws obeyed by this earth and its productions may be traced as pervading the appointments of revelation. It were beside our purpose to go at length into demonstration of this coincidence. But you may all perceive, assuming its existence, that the furnished argument is clear and convincing. If there run the same principle through natural things and spiritual, through the book of nature and the Bible, we vindicate the same authorship to both, and prove, with an almost geometric precision, that the God of creation is also the God of Christianity. I look on the natural firmament with its glorious inlay of stars; and it is unto me as the breastplate of the great high priest, "ardent with gems oracular," from which, as from the urim and thummim on Aaron's ephod, come messages full of divinity. And when I turn to the page of Scripture, and perceive the nicest resemblance between the characters in which this page is written, and those which glitter before me in the crowded concave, I feel that, in trusting myself to the declarations of the Bible, I cling to Him who speaks to

me from every point, and by every splendour of the visible universe, whose voice is in the marchings of planets, and the rushing of whose melodies is in the wings of the daylight.

But, though we go not into the general inquiry, we take one great principle, the principle of a resurrection, and we affirm, in illustration of what has been advanced, that it runs alike through God's natural and spiritual dealings. Just as God hath appointed that man's body, after mouldering away, shall come forth quickened and renewed, so has he ordained that the seed, after corrupting in the ground, shall yield a harvest of the like kind with itself. It is, moreover, God's ordinary course to allow an apparent destruction as preparatory, or introductory to, complete success or renovation. He does not permit the springing up, until there has been, on human calculation, a thorough withering away. So that the maxim might be shown to hold universally good, "that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it first die." We may observe yet further that, as with the husbandman, if he sow the corn, he shall reap the corn, and if he sow the weed, he shall reap the weed. Thus with myself as a responsible agent, if I sow the corruptible, I shall reap the corruptible; and if I sow the imperishable, I shall reap the imperishable. The seed reproduces itself. This is the fact, in reference to spiritual things, on which we would fasten your attention; "whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap."

Now, we are all, to a certain extent, familiar with this principle; for it is forced on our notice by every-day occurrences. We observe that a dissolute and reckless youth is ordinarily followed by a premature and miserable old age. We see that honesty and industry win commonly, comfort and respect, and that, on the contrary, levity and a want of carefulness produce pauperism and disrepute. And yet further, unless we go over to the ranks of infidelity, we cannot question that a course of disobedience to God is earning man's eternal destruction, whilst, through submission to the revealed will of his Maker, there is secured admittance

into a glorious heritage. We are thus aware that there runs through the Creator's dealings with our race the principle of an identity, or sameness, between the things which man sows and those which he reaps. But we think it possible that we may have contented ourselves with too superficial a view of this principle; and that, through not searching into what may be termed its philosophy, we allow much that is important to elude observation. The seed sown in the earth goes on, as it were, by a sort of natural process, and without direct interference from God, to yield seed of the same description with itself. And we wish it well observed, whether there be not in spiritual things an analogy the most perfect to what thus takes place in natural. We think that upon a careful examination, you will find groundwork of belief that the simile holds good in every possible respect; so that what a man sows, if left to its own vegetating powers, will yield, naturally, a harvest of its own kind and description.

We shall study to establish this point in regard, first of all, to the present scene of probation; and, secondly, to the future scene of recompense.

We begin with the present scene of probation, and will put you in possession of the exact point to be made out, by referring you to the instance of Pharaoh. We know that whilst God was acting on the Egyptians by the awful apparatus of plague and prodigy, he is often said to have hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that the monarch refused to let Israel go. And it is a great question to decide, whether God actually interfered to strengthen and confirm the obstinacy of Pharaoh, or only left the king to the workings of his own heart, as knowing that one degree of unbelief would generate another and a stauncher. It seems to us at variance with all that is revealed of the Creator, to suppose him urging on the wicked in his wickedness, or bringing any engine to bear on the ungodly which shall make them more desperate in rebellion. God willeth not the death of any sinner. And though, after long striving with an individual, after plying him with the various

excitements which are best calculated to stir a rational, and agitate an immortal being, he may withdraw all the aids of the Spirit, and so give him over to that worst of all tyrants, himself; yet this, we contend, must be the extreme thing ever done by the Almighty to man, the leaving him, but not the constraining him, to do evil. And when, therefore, it is said that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, and when the expression is repeated, so as to mark a continued and on-going hardening, we have no other idea of the meaning than that God, moved by the obstinacy of Pharaoh, withdrew from him, gradually, all the restraints of his grace; and that as these restraints were more and more removed, the heart of the king was more and more hardened. We look upon the instance as a precise illustration of the truth that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Pharaoh sowed obstinacy, and Pharaoh reaped obstinacy. The seed was put into the soil; and there was no need, any more than with the grain of corn, that God should interfere with any new power. Nothing more was required than that the seed should be left to vegetate, to act out its own nature. And though God, had he pleased, might have counteracted this nature, yet, when he resolved to give up Pharaoh to his unbelief, he had nothing to do but to let alone this nature. The seed of infidelity, which Pharaoh had sown when he rejected the first miracles, was left to itself, and to its own vegetation. It sent up, accordingly, a harvest of its own kind, a harvest of infidelity, and Pharaoh was not to be persuaded by any of the subsequent miracles. So that, when the monarch went on from one degree of hardness to another, till at length, advancing through the cold ranks of the prostrated first-born, he pursued across a blackened and devastated territory, the people for whose emancipation there had been the visible making bare of the arm of Omnipotence, he was not an instance—perish the thought—of a man compelled by his Maker to offend and be lost, but simply a witness to the truth of the principle, that "whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap."

Now that which took place in the case of the Egyptian is, we argue, precisely what occurs in regard generally to the impenitent. God destroys no man. Every man who is destroyed must destroy himself. When a man stifles an admonition of conscience, he may fairly be said to sow the stiflings of conscience. And when conscience admonishes him the next time, it will be more feebly and faintly. There will be a less felt difficulty in overpowering the admonition. And the febleness of remonstrance, and the facility of resistance, these will increase on every repetition; not because God interferes to make the man callous, but because the thing sown was stifling of conscience, and therefore the thing reaped is stifling of conscience. The Holy Spirit strives with every man. Conscience is but the voice of Deity heard above the din of human passions. But let conscience be resisted, and the Spirit is grieved. Then, as with Pharaoh, there is an abstraction of that influence by which evil is kept under. And thus there is a less and less counteraction to the vegetating power of the seed, and, therefore a more and more abundant upspringing of that which was sown. So that, though there must be a direct and mighty interference of Deity for the salvation of a man, there is no such interference for his destruction. God must sow the seed of regeneration, and enable a man, according to the phraseology of the verse succeeding our text, to sow "to the spirit." But man sows for himself the seed of impenitence, and of himself, "he soweth to his flesh." And what he sows, he reaps. If, as he grows older, he grow more confirmed in his wickedness; if warnings come upon him with less and less energy; if the solemnities of the judgment lose more and more their power of alarming him, and the terrors of hell their power of affrighting him; why, the man is nothing else but an exhibition of the thickening of the harvest of which himself sowed the seed; and he puts forth in this his confirmed and settled impenitence, a demonstration, legible by every careful observer, that there needs no apparatus for the turning a man gradu-

ally from the clay to the adamant, over and above the apparatus of his own heart, left to itself and let alone to harden.

We greatly desire that you should rightly understand what the agency is through which the soul is destroyed. It is not that God hath sent out a decree against a man. It is not that he throws a darkness before his eyes which cannot be penetrated, and a chiliness into his blood which cannot be thawed, and a torpor into his limbs which cannot be overcome. Harvest-time bringing an abundant produce of what was sown in the seed-time, this, we contend, is the sum total of the mystery. God interferes not, as it were, with the processes of nature. He opposes not, or, to speak more correctly, he withdraws gradually his opposition to, the vegetation of the seed. And this is all. There is nothing more needed. You resist a motion of the Spirit. Well then, this facilitates further resistance. He who has resisted once will have less difficulty in resisting the second time, and less than that the third time, and less than that the fourth time. So that there comes a harvest of resistance, and all from the single grain of the first resistance. You indulge yourself once in a known sin. Why, you will be more easily overpowered by the second temptation, and again more easily by the third, and again more easily by the fourth. And what is this but a harvest of sinful indulgences, and all from the one grain of the first indulgence? You omit some portion of spiritual exercises, of prayer, or of the study of the word. The omission will grow upon you. You will omit more to-morrow, and more the next day, and still more the next. And thus there will be a harvest of omissions, and all from the solitary grain of the first omission. And if, through the germinating power of that which man sows, he proceed naturally from bad to worse; if resistance produce resistance, and indulgence indulgence, and omission omission, shall it be denied that the sinner, throughout the whole history of his experience, throughout his progress across the waste of worldliness and obduracy and impenitence, passing on, as he does, to successive stages of

indifference to God; and fool-hardiness, and recklessness, is nothing else but the mower of the fruits of his own husbandry; and thus witnesses, with a power which outdoes all the power of language, that "whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap?"

It is in this manner that we go into what we term the philosophy of our text when applied to the present scene of probation. We take the seed in the soil. We show you that, by a natural process, without the interference of God, and simply through his ceasing to counteract the tendencies, there is produced a wide crop of the same grain as was sown. And thus, all kinds of opposition to God propagating themselves, he who becomes wrought up into an infidel hardihood, or lulled into a sepulchral apathy, is nothing but the sower living on to be the reaper, the husbandman in the successive stages of an agriculture wherein the ploughing, and the planting, and the gathering, are all his own achievement, and all his own destruction.

Now we have confined ourselves to the supposition that the thing sown is wickedness. But you will see at once that, with a mere verbal alteration, whatever has been advanced illustrates our text when the thing sown is righteousness. If a man resist temptation, there will be a facility of resisting ever augmenting as he goes on with self-denial. Every new achievement of principle will smooth the way to future achievements of the like kind; and the fruit of each moral victory—for we may consider the victory as a seed that is sown—is to place us on loftier vantage-ground for the triumphs of righteousness in days yet to come. We cannot perform a virtuous act without gaining fresh sinew for the service of virtue, just as we cannot perform a vicious, without riveting faster to ourselves the fetters of vice. And, assuredly, if there be thus such a growing strength in habit that every action makes way for its repetition, we may declare of virtue and righteousness that they reproduce themselves; and is not this the same thing as proving that what we sow, that also do we reap?

We would yet further remark, under

this head of discourse, that the principle of reaping what we sow is specially to be traced through all the workings of philanthropy. We are persuaded that if an eminently charitable man experience great reverse of circumstances, so that from having been the affluent and the benefactor, he become the needy and dependant, he would attract towards himself, in his distress, all the sympathies of a neighbourhood. And whilst the great man, who had had nothing but his greatness to recommend him, would be unpitied or uncare for in disaster; and the avaricious man, who had grasped tightly his wealth, would meet only ridicule when it had escaped from his hold; the philanthropic man, who had used his riches as a steward, would form, in his penury, a sort of focus for the kindness of a thousand hearts, and multitudes would press forward to tender him the succour which he had once given to others; and thus there would be a mighty reaping into his own granaries of that very seed which he had been assiduous in sowing.

We go on to observe, that it is the marvellous property of spiritual things, though we can scarcely affirm it of natural, that the effort to teach them to others gives enlargement to our own sphere of information. We are persuaded, that the most experienced Christian cannot sit down with the neglected and grossly ignorant labourer; nay, not with the child in a Sunday or infant school, and strive to explain and enforce the great truths of the Bible, without finding his own views of the gospel amplified and cleared through this engagement in the business of tuition. The mere trying to make a point plain to another, will oftentimes make it far plainer than ever to ourselves. In illustrating a doctrine of Scripture, in endeavouring to bring it down to the level of a weak or undisciplined understanding, you will find that doctrine presenting itself to your own minds with a new power and unimagined beauty; and though you may have read the standard writers on theology, and mastered the essays of the most learned divines, yet shall such fresh and vigorous

apprehensions of truth be derived often from the effort to press it home on the intellect and conscience of the ignorant, that you shall pronounce the cottage of the untaught peasant your best school-house, and the questions even of a child your most searching catechisings on the majestic things and the mysteries of our faith. And as you tell over to the poor cottager the story of the incarnation and crucifixion, and inform him of the nature and effects of Adam's apostacy; or even find yourself required to adduce more elementary truths, pressing on the neglected man the being of a God, and the immortality of the soul; O! it shall constantly occur that you will feel a keener sense than ever of the preciousness of Christ, or a greater awe at the majesty of Jehovah, or a loftier bounding of spirit at the thought of your own deathlessness; and if you feel tempted to count it strange that in teaching another you teach also yourself, and that you carry away from your intercourse with the mechanic, or the child, such an accession to your own knowledge, or your own love, as shall seem to make you the indebted party, and not the obliging; then you have only to remember, and the remembrance will sweep away surprise, that it is a fixed appointment of the Almighty, that "whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap."

In respect, moreover, to alms-giving, we may assert that there is evidently such a present advantage in communicating of our temporal good things, that the giver becomes the receiver, and thus the principle under review finds a fresh illustration. The general comfort and security of society depends so greatly on the well-being of the lower orders, that the rich consult most for themselves when they consult most for the poor. There must be restlessness and anxiety in the palace whilst misery oppresses the great mass of a population. And every effort to increase the happiness, and heighten the character of the poor, will tell powerfully on the condition of those by whom it is made; seeing that the contentment and good order of the peasantry of a country give value to the revenues of its

nobles and merchants. For our own part, we never look on a public hospital or infirmary, we never behold the almshouses into which old age may be received, and the asylums which have been thrown up on all sides for the widow and the orphan, without feeling that, however generously the rich come forward to the relief of the poor, they advantage themselves whilst providing for the suffering and destitute. These buildings, which are the best diadem of our country, not only bring blessings on the land by serving, it may be, as electrical conductors, which turn from us many flashes of the lightning of wrath, but, being as centres whence succours are sent through distressed portions of our community, they are fostering-places of kindly dispositions towards the wealthier ranks, and may therefore be so considered as structures in which a kingdom's prosperity is nursed, that the fittest inscription over their gateways would be this,—“whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap.”

Now before we turn to the second topic of discourse, we would make a close application of some of our foregoing statements. You perceive the likelihood, or rather the certainty, to be, that, in all cases, there will be a self-propagating power in evil, so that the wrong done shall be parent to a line of misdoings. We have shown you, for example, that to stifle a conviction is the first step in a pathway which leads directly to stupefaction of conscience. And we desire to fasten on this fact, and so to exhibit it, that all may discern their near concernment therewith. We remark that men will flock in crowds to the public preaching of the word, though the master natural passion, whatsoever it be, retains undisputed the lordship of their spirits. And this passion may be avarice, or it may be voluptuousness, or ambition, or envy, or pride. But, however characterized, the dominant lust is brought into the sanctuary, and exposed, so to speak, to the exorcisms of the preacher. And who shall say what a disturbing force the sermon will oftentimes put forth against the master passion, and how frequently the word

of the living God, delivered in earnestness and affection, shall have almost made a breach in the strongholds of Satan? Ay, we believe that often, when a minister, gathering himself up in the strength of his Master, launches the thunderbolt of truth against vice and unrighteousness, there is a vast stirring of heart through the listening assembly; and that as he reasons of “righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come,” though the natural ear catch no sounds of anxiety and alarm, attendant angels, who watch the workings of the gospel, hear the deep beatings of many souls, and almost start at the bounding throb of aroused and agitated spirits. If Satan ever tremble for his ascendancy, it is when the preacher has riveted the attention of the unconverted individual, and, after describing and denouncing the covetous, or pouring out the torrent of his speech on an exhibition of the voluptuary, or exposing the madness and misery of the proud, comes down on that individual with the startling announcement, “thou art the man.” And the individual will go away from the sanctuary, convinced of the necessity of subduing the master passion; and he will form, and for a while act upon, the resolution of wrestling against pride, or of mortifying lust, or of renouncing avarice. But he will proceed in his own strength, and, having no consciousness of the inabilities of his nature, will not seek to God's Spirit for assistance. In a little time, therefore, all the impression wears away. He saw only the danger of sin; he went not on to see its vileness. And the mind soon habituates itself, or soon grows indifferent, to the contemplation of danger, and, above all, when perhaps distant. Hence the man will return quickly to his old haunts. And whether it be to money-making that he again gives himself, or to sensuality, or to ambition, he will enter on the pursuit with an eagerness heightened by abstinence; and thus the result shall be practically the same, as though, having sown moral stupor, he were reaping in a harvest tremendously luxuriant. And, O, if the man, after this renouncement, and restoration, of the master passion, come again

to the sanctuary; and if again the preacher denounce, with a righteous vehemence, every working of ungodliness; and the fire be in his eye, and the thunder on his tongue, as he makes a stand for God, and for truth, against a reckless and semi-infidel generation; alas, the man who has felt convictions, and sown their stiflings, will be more inaccessible than ever, and more impervious. He will have been hardened through the vegetating process which has gone on in his soul. A far mightier apparatus than before will be required to make the lightest impression. And when you think that there the man is now sitting, unmoved by the terrors of the word, that he can listen with indifference to the very truths which once agitated him, and that, as a consequence on the reproduction of the seed, there is more of the marble in his composition than before, and more of the ice, and more of the iron, so that the likelihood of salvation is fearfully diminished; ye can need no other warning against trifling with convictions, and so making light of the appointment, that "whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap."

But we proposed to examine, in the second place, the application of the principle of our text to the future scene of recompense. There can be no question that the reference of the apostle is, specially, to the retributions of another state of being. The present life is emphatically the seed-time; the next life the harvest time. And the matter we now have in hand is the ascertaining, whether it be by the natural process of the thing sown yielding the thing reaped that sinfulness here shall give torment hereafter.

You will observe that, in showing the application of the principle under review to the present scene of probation, we proved that the utmost which God does towards confirming a man in impenitence is the leaving him to himself, the withdrawing from him gradually the remonstrances of his Spirit. The man is literally his own hardener; and, therefore, literally his own destroyer. And we now inquire, whether or no he will be his own punisher? We seem required, if we would maintain rigidly the principle of

our text, to suppose that what is reaped in the future shall be identical with what is sown in the present. It cannot be questioned that this is a fair representation. The seed re-produces itself. It is the same grain which the sower scatters, and the reaper collects. We may, therefore, lay it down as the statement of our text, that what is reaped in the next life shall be literally of the same kind with what is sown in this life. But if this be correct, it must follow that a man's sinfulness shall be a man's punishment. And there is no lack of scriptural evidence on the side of the opinion, that the leaving the wicked, throughout eternity, to their mutual recriminations, to the workings and boilings of over-wrought passions, to the scorpion sting of an undying remorse, and all the native and inborn agonies of vice; that this, without the interference of a divinely sent ministry of vengeance, may make that pandemonium which is sketched to us by all that is terrible and ghastly in imagery; and that tormenting, only through giving up the sinner to be his own tormentor, God may fulfil all the ends of a retributive economy, awarding to wickedness its merited condemnation, and displaying to the universe the dreadful-ness of rebellion.

It may be, we say, that there shall be required no direct interferences on the part of God. It may be that the Almighty shall not commission an avenging train to goad and lacerate the lost. The sinner is hardened by being left to himself; and may it not be that the sinner shall be punished by being left to himself? We think assuredly that the passage before us leads straightways to such a conclusion. We may have habituated ourselves to the idea that God, as it were, shall take into his own hands the punishment of the condemned, and that, standing over them as the executioner of the sentence, he will visit body and soul with the inflictions of wrath. But it consists far better with the character of God, that judgments should be viewed as the natural produce of sinfulness, so that, without any divine interference, the sinfulness will generate the judgments. Let sinfulness alone, and it will become punish

ment. Such is, probably, the true account of this awful matter. The thing reaped is the thing sown. And if the thing sown be sinfulness, and if the thing reaped be punishment, then the punishment, after all, must be the sinfulness; and that fearful apparatus of torture which is spoken of in Scripture, the apparatus of a worm that dieth not, and of a fire that is not quenched, this may be just a man's own guilt, the things sown in this mortal life sprung up and waving in an immortal harvest. We think this a point of great moment. It were comparatively little to say of an individual who sells himself to work evil, and carries it with a high hand and a brazen front against the Lord of the whole earth, that he shuts himself up to a certain and definite destruction. The thrilling truth is, that, in working iniquity, he sows for himself anguish. He gives not way to a new desire, he allows not a fresh victory to lust, without multiplying the amount of final torment. By every excursion of passion, and by every indulgence of an unhallowed craving, and by all the misdoings of a hardened or dissolute life, he may be literally said to pour into the granary of his future destinies the goods and stings which shall madden his spirit. He lays up more food for self-reproach. He widens the field over which thought will pass in bitterness, and mow down remorse. He teaches the worm to be ingenious in excruciating, by tasking his wit that he may be ingenious in sinning—for some men, as the prophet saith, and it is a wonderful expression—"are wise to do evil." And thus, his iniquities opening, as it were, fresh inlets for the approaches of vengeance, with the growth of wickedness will be the growth of punishment; and at last it will appear that his resistance to convictions, his neglect of opportunities, and his determined enslavement to evil, have literally worked for him a "far more exceeding and eternal weight" of despair.

But even this expresses not clearly and fully what seems taught by our text. We are searching for an identity or sameness between what is sown and what is reaped. We, therefore, yet further ob-

serve, that it may not be needful that a material rack should be prepared for the body, and fiery spirits gnaw upon the soul. It may not be needful that the Creator should appoint distinct and extraneous arrangements for torture. Let what we call the husbandry of wickedness go forward; let the sinner reap what the sinner has sown; and there is a harvest of anguish for ever to be gathered. Who discerns not that punishment may thus be sinfulness, and that, therefore, the principle of our text may hold good, to the very letter, in a scene of retribution? A man "sows to the flesh;" this is the apostle's description of sinfulness. He is "of the flesh to reap corruption;" this is his description of punishment. He "sows to the flesh," by pampering the lusts of the flesh; and he "reaps of the flesh," when these pampered lusts fall on him with fresh cravings, and demand of him fresh gratifications. But suppose this reaping continued in the next life, and is not the man mowing down the harvest of agony? Let all those passions and desires, which it has been the man's business upon earth to indulge, hunger and thirst for gratification hereafter, and will ye seek elsewhere for the parched tongue beseeching fruitlessly one drop of water? Let the envious man keep his envy, and the jealous man his jealousy, and the revengeful man his revengefulness; and each has a worm which will eat out everlastingly the very core of his soul. Let the miser have still his thoughts upon gold, and the drunkard his upon the wine-cup, and the sensualist his upon voluptuousness; and a fire-sheet is round each which shall never be extinguished. We know not whether it be possible to conjure up a more terrific image of a lost man than by supposing him everlastingly preyed upon by the master lust which has here held him in bondage. We think that you have before you the spectacle of a being hunted, as it were, by a never-wearied fiend, when you imagine that there rages in the licentious and profligate, only wrought into a fury which has no parallel upon earth, that very passion which it was the concern of a lifetime to indulge, but which it must now be the

employment of an eternity to deny. We are persuaded that you reach the summit of all that is tremendous in conception, when you suppose a man consigned to the tyranny of a lust which cannot be conquered, and which cannot be gratified. It is, literally, surrendering him to a worm which dies not, to a fire which is quenched not. And whilst the just does the part of a ceaseless tormentor, the man, unable longer to indulge it, will writhe in remorse at having endowed it with sovereignty; and thus there will go on (though not in our power to conceive, and, O God, grant it may never be our lot to experience) the cravings of passion with the self reproachings of the soul; and the torn and tossed creature shall for ever long to gratify lust, and for ever bewail his madness in gratifying it.

Now you must perceive that in thus sketching the possible nature of future retribution, we only show that "whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap." We prove that sinfulness may be punishment, so that the things reaped shall be identical with the things sown, according to the words of the prophet Hosea, "they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind." We reckon that the rigid application of the principle of our text requires us to suppose the retribution of the ungodly the natural produce of their actions. It shall not, perhaps, be that God will interpose with an apparatus of judgments, any more than he now interposes with an apparatus for hardening, or confirming in impenitence. Indifference, if let alone, will produce obduracy; and obduracy, if let alone, will produce torment. Obduracy is indifference multiplied; and thus it is the harvest from the grain. Torment is obduracy perpetuated and bemoaned; and this again is harvest—the grain reproduced, but with thorns round the ear. Thus from first to last "whatsoever a man soweth, that also does he reap."

We would add that our text is not the only scriptural passage which intimates that sinfulness shall spring up into punishment, exactly as the seed sown produces the harvest. In the first chapter of the book of Proverbs, the eternal wis-

dom marks out, in terrible language the doom of the scorners. "I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh." And then, when he would describe their exact punishment, he says, "they shall eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." They reap, you see, what they sowed. Their torments are "their own devices." We have a similar expression in the book of Job, "even as I have seen, they that plough iniquity and sow wickedness reap the same." Thus again in the book of Proverbs, "the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways." We may add that solemn verse in the last chapter of the book of Revelations, which seems to us exactly to the point. It is spoken in the prospect of Christ's immediate appearing. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." The master property is here represented as remaining the master property. The unjust continues for ever the unjust; the filthy for ever the filthy. So that the indulged principle keeps fast its ascendancy, as though, according to our foregoing supposition, it is to become the tormenting principle. The distinguishing characteristic never departs. When it can no longer be served and gratified by its slave, it wreaks its disappointment tremendously on its victim.

There is thus a precise agreement between our text, as now expounded, and other portions of the Bible which refer to the same topic. We have indeed, as you will observe, dealt chiefly with the sowing and reaping of the wicked, and but just alluded to those of the righteous. It would not, however, be difficult to prove to you that, inasmuch as holiness is happiness, godliness shall be reward, even as sinfulness shall be punishment. And it is clear that the apostle designed to include both cases under his statement, for he subjoins as its illustration, "he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit

reap life everlasting." We cannot indeed plead, in the second case, for as rigid an application of the principle as in the first. We cannot argue, that is, for what we call the natural process of vegetation. There must be constant interferences on the part of Deity. God himself, rather than man, is the sower. And unless God were continually busy with the seed, it could never germinate, and send up a harvest of glory. We think that this distinction of the cases is intimated by St. Paul. The one sows "to the flesh;" himself the husbandman, himself the territory. The other sows "to the Spirit," to the Holy Ghost; and here there is a superinduced soil which differs altogether from the natural. But if there be not, in each case, precisely the same, there is sufficient rigour of application to bear out the assertion of our text. We remember that it was "a crown of righteousness" which sparkled before St. Paul; and we may, therefore, believe that the righteousness, which God's grace has nourished in the heart, will grow into recompense, just as the wickedness, in which the transgressor has indulged, will shoot into torment. So that, although it were easy to speak at greater length on the case of true believers, we may lay it down as a demonstrated truth, whether respect be had to the ungodly or the disobedient of the earth, that "whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap."

And now, what mean ye to reap in that grand harvest-day, the day of judgment? Every one of you is sowing either to the flesh or to the Spirit; and every one of you must, hereafter, take the sickle in his hand, and mow down the produce of his husbandry. We will speak no longer on things of terror. We have said enough to alarm the indifferent. And we pray God that the careless amongst you may find these words of the prophet ringing in their ears, when they lie down to rest this night, "the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." But, ere we conclude, we would address a word to the men of God, and animate

them to the toils of tillage by the hopes of reaping. We know that it is with much opposition from indwelling corruption, with many thwartings from Satan and your own evil hearts, that ye prosecute the work of breaking up your fallow-ground, and sowing to yourselves in righteousness. Ye have to deal with a stubborn soil. The prophet Amos asks, "shall horses run upon the rock, will one plough there with oxen?" Yet this is precisely what you have to do. It is the rock, "the heart of stone," which you must bring into cultivation. Yet be not dismayed. Above all things, pause not as though doubtful whether to prosecute a labour which seems to grow as it is performed. "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven." Rather comfort yourselves with that beautiful declaration of the Psalmist, "they that sow in tears shall reap in joy." Rather call to mind that saying of the apostle "ye are God's husbandry." It is God who by his Spirit ploughs the ground, and sows the seed, and imparts the influences of sun and shower. "My Father," said Jesus, "is the husbandman;" and can ye not feel assured that he will give the increase? Look ye on to the harvest-time. What though the winter be dreary and long, and there seem no shooting of the fig tree to tell you that summer is nigh? Christ shall yet speak to his church in that loveliest of poetry, "Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land." Then shall be the harvest. We cannot tell you the glory of the things which ye shall reap. We cannot show you the wavings of the golden corn. But this we know, that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us;" and, therefore, brethren, beloved in the Lord, "be ye not weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not."

## SERMON II.

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION EXPLAINED AND ENFORCED.

BY THE REV. JOHN LOMAS.

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“Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection.”—  
Heb. vi. 1.

THE apostle, in this chapter, exposes the danger of apostacy, and guards against it. A desire after perpetual progress is one of the most effectual antidotes to a spirit of declension; and St. Paul, having established the verity of the Christian system, and thus laid a safe foundation for practical admonitions, exhorts the Hebrew converts, in the words of the text, to diligence in seeking after a perfect acquaintance with the whole Christian scheme. Without any formal introduction to the passage before us, I shall endeavour, first, to explain, and, secondly, to enforce the exhortation of the text.

*First:* WHAT ARE “THE PRINCIPLES OF THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST,” AND IN WHAT SENSE ARE THEY TO BE LEFT? HOW AND WHY SHOULD WE LEAVE THEM, AND GO ON UNTO PERFECTION? “The principles of the doctrine of Christ” are those elementary truths which lie at the foundation of Christian experience and Christian practice. Paul specifies the chief of these in the verses which follow the text—the duty and necessity of repentance enforced by the solemnity and certainty of the judgment to come; the necessity of the Holy Spirit’s influences, and of his reception by all Christian believers; with the joys produced by a sense of pardon, and the hope of future glory. These truths St. Paul denominates “the principles of the doctrine of Christ,” because they constitute the fundamental parts of the Christian system: they are, so to speak, the alphabet of Christian doctrine. Now, these “principles” are not to be left, in any sense of the term, till they are thoroughly under-

stood. To leave principles before they are thoroughly mastered, is to expose ourselves to constant error in our future course. Every person who has been employed in public instruction knows that false or inadequate notions of first principles propagate themselves, and produce multiplied errors in all subsequent steps of our progress. In communicating a knowledge of any system, you first require that the elements should be mastered. You will never introduce a pupil into the art of spelling before the alphabet is acquired: this step is essential to future attainments. So, in mathematical science, certain axioms, admitted to be true, must first be mastered, before the application of them to the demonstration of more abstruse and complex propositions can ever be admitted.

Many mistakes, with regard to the nature of experimental religion, would be avoided, if men would only adopt the same maxims in the study of religion which they admit to be important in all other studies, and if men did not presume to decide, to dogmatize upon the matters of experimental religion, and to sound its depths, before they had put themselves into possession of the line which should fathom them. It is an important part, therefore, of the duty of every public teacher, frequently to inculcate “the principles of the doctrine of Christ,” and to insist upon them often and with great emphasis, especially in the case of those who, “ever learning, are never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Ignorance of these principles sometimes

reflects discredit upon the teacher, and always reflects disgrace upon the pupil. Till first principles, then, are mastered, they are not, in any sense, to be left. A principle is mastered when satisfactory evidence is possessed by the student. Truth has its own kind of evidence. With regard to truth which may be submitted to the test of experience, we have satisfactory evidence of it when we feel its experimental effects: he understands the doctrine of repentance who has felt its sorrows—he understands the doctrine of pardon who has tasted the peace which flows from it—he knows the principles of the gospel, with regard to the influence of the Spirit, who has been “sealed” by that Spirit, as a Spirit of adoption, and who has “the witness in himself.” Now, when principles are mastered by a knowledge of their experimental results, then we are to “leave” them.

But, again, as principles are not to be left, in any sense, till they are thoroughly understood, so *neither are they to be abandoned*. To abandon principles is to apostatize fatally. This appears to constitute the character and danger of those numerous professors, whose condition St. Paul describes, in such vivid language, in the verses that follow the text. They, it appears, had reached a state of hopeless and irrecoverable apostacy—how? by renouncing first principles. How is a man to be recovered from speculative or practical error? You must attempt his recovery by making your appeal to some truth which he yet admits; but suppose he admits none—suppose he has renounced the whole body of Christian truth, and you and he have no one religious principle in common—how is the recovery of such a man to accuracy of thought, or propriety of conduct, to be effected? The thing is practically impossible. First principles, then, are not to be renounced. When St. Paul, therefore, exhorts us to “leave” them, it is of course implied that these principles are to be left for the purpose of applying them to subsequent discoveries and attainments in religion. Principles are to be left as the alphabet of a language is left when the pupil proceeds to put letters together;

—principles are to be left as the axioms of a science are left, when understood, for the purpose of making application of them to larger propositions;—principles are to be left, as a conquered country, which has fallen into the hands of a successful general, is left, after he has garrisoned it with his own troops, that he may bring under his dominion that portion of the enemy’s territory which yet stands out against his arms.

In this sense principles are to be left; and we oppose this part of the exhortation of the text to errors which it appears to provide against. First, we oppose the spirit and maxim of the text to the error of those who are continually suffering their faith in first principles to be shaken—men who indulge a doubtful and skeptical temper—who know not when to be satisfied with evidence—who are constantly examining questions touching the principles of religion, as though they never had been settled, and as though they never were to be settled. The conduct of such persons, St. Paul describes as resembling the conduct of a man who, after having laid with care the foundation of his building, should be perpetually removing the stones that constituted it, distrusting the stability of the ground beneath. Why, a man should take care that the ground on which his foundation stands is good—that is to be his first business; but after he has satisfied himself, by careful inspection, that he has good ground to rest upon, and his foundation is once laid, of course it ought to be laid once for all. Now, with regard to the leading truths of religion, and our personal interest in them, no man, as I have said just now, should satisfy himself till he has sufficient warrant for his faith, and scriptural reason for concluding himself to be an accepted child of God; but after he has satisfied himself on that point, he is to take the matter for granted, and not to be perpetually and doubtfully asking for fresh evidence in order to make that clear which has already been established to his own satisfaction: he is not to be perpetually calling up again from their graves the ghosts of objections which have repeatedly been exorcised by the

light and power of truth : he is not to be continually beginning anew the great work of religious inquiry, as though doubt were always to hang on this important subject. To indulge a temper of this kind is to foster the unbelief of our hearts—it is to create a skeptical spirit—it is to expose ourselves to every wind of doctrine—it is to invite the assaults of temptation—it is effectually to debar ourselves from all progress in religion.

Principles are to be left, and we oppose the maxim of the text, secondly, to the conduct, to the indolence of those who regard principles as though they constituted the whole of religion. There are some, it is to be feared, of this character. They can ascertain with great precision the date of their spiritual birth ;—they can describe most minutely all the circumstances which accompanied and which, to their own satisfaction, verify the change ;—they are continually recurring to the fact of their conversion, sometimes with self-complacency and sometimes, it is to be feared, in a spirit of indolence and satisfaction inconsistent with all religious improvement. Now, my friends, though the principles of religion are of importance because they are fundamental, yet the principles of religion are but the alphabet of the system. The doctrine of justification by faith is important rather from the grand truths with which it stands connected, than when viewed in its own insulated state. The great design of the New Testament—of the epistles that were written for our instruction and admonition, and of the promises which are given to excite Christian diligence, is to make the man of God perfect, and thoroughly to furnish or qualify him for every good word and for every good work. What is the value of what we know in religion, except in as far as it is preparatory to what remains to be learned ? What is the value of the attainments already secured in religion, except in as far as they may be stepping-stones to future attainments ? “Not as though I had already attained,” was the spirit of the apostle, such his ardent solicitude to make future and larger advances in religion—“Not as though I had already attained, either

were already perfect ; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.”

We are, then, to “leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ”—we are to “go on unto perfection.” Must I, then, *Secondly*, SPEND A FEW MOMENTS IN EXPLAINING THE EXHORTATION, AND THEN PRESS THE WHOLE ON YOUR SERIOUS ATTENTION ?—“Let us go on unto perfection.” What is this perfection towards which we are continually to make progress ? The term here refers, perhaps, rather to doctrine—to Christian knowledge, than to Christian experience or practice ; but then, of course, knowledge is only of importance as it is connected with holiness, and as it is connected with practice ; and we may take the term, therefore, without committing any error, in its common and largest acceptation. What, then, is this perfection towards which we are to be continually making advances ? Suppose I could not describe it, or suppose I were to decline doing so—what then ? Suppose one acquainted with the alphabet of religion only were to decline attempting any explicit representation of the perfection of the scheme—what then ? We prefer taking some scriptural statements which will be found to place the subject the most unobjectionably before us, and then to offer a few remarks by way of guarding the doctrine. Would you, then, have a scriptural representation of that perfection towards which we are to go on ? then take it in the prayer of the apostle for the Ephesian churches—“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man ; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height ; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.” Go on till you understand all the parts of that comprehensive

and sublime prayer—till you have spiritual ideas corresponding to all the expressions in it, and till your religious state represent and embody the whole of them. There is the perfection of faith—there is the perfection of love—there is described the fulness of the Christian character.

Would you take a more brief and summary view of the same state? then you shall have it in the words of the apostle John—that simple and yet sublime writer—“God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him!” Or will you take a view of the same state from another expression of the same apostle? What is the evidence—are you asking—by which we may know that our love, the leading and cardinal grace of the Christian character, has attained to its maturity—what is the evidence by which its maturity is distinguished? “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.” “Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is so are we in this world.” Brethren, I confess, unhesitatingly, that if I abstain from making any comment upon expressions like these, it is because I feel satisfied that no terms I could employ could render them more clear in their meaning, and that to substitute any others in their place would be only to “darken counsel by words without knowledge.”

Will you allow me to say a word or two by way of caution here and of direction there? Are you then ready to say that many of these expressions describe a state of which it is extremely difficult to form an adequate conception? Let me make one remark. In going on “unto perfection,” we are not to be solicitous that doctrinal clearness should precede, and be independent upon, an experimental acquaintance with the truth. Religion is a subject, from beginning to end, to be experimentally understood. Clear views depend much more on fidelity to the grace and knowledge we profess than they do upon any thing else; and we must not always expect, while we are

climbing, while we are endeavouring to reach the summit above us, to be able, till we reach it, clearly to command the whole of that prospect which the summit itself will give to us. If the descriptions given to us of its scenery are, in some respects, difficult to be understood; and if we would have clear views, let us use all diligence in the ascent, and the higher we reach the clearer will be our views, and the more extensive the prospect we command.

Let us “go on unto perfection.” Do you ask—how? By fidelity to the light and the grace we possess, and by the prayerful submission of our hearts to the teaching of the Holy Ghost. Let us “go on unto perfection!” How? diligently, daily, continually! Let us “go on unto perfection,” and beware, that we do not, with regard to this great doctrine of our holy religion, take our standard of it from the experience and views of others—we must take our standard of it, exclusively, from the representations of holy Scripture. In the methods by which God the Holy Ghost conducts Christians to the knowledge of his will, and to the enjoyment of conformity to him, there is an almost endless diversity; and though religious biography is extremely serviceable, from the general principles which it establishes, it becomes injurious to us when we propose the experience of others, as the certain standard by which our own progress and attainments are to be regulated. It is an evil which has a tendency to generate an artificial character in religion, inconsistent with that beautiful variety which obtains alike in the productions of grace and in the works of nature. And we are sometimes disposed to think that, in this way, some sincere inquirers after holiness prescribe to the Almighty a path by which he shall conduct them, which does not leave the Holy Spirit to work as he will; forgetting, that as “the wind bloweth where it listeth,” so the Holy Spirit, in working upon the human mind, acts by laws of which he does not give any account unto us, and which are not, in respect of their applications, always uniform.

Let us “go on unto perfection;” and

let us take care not to confound a part of religion with the whole, nor to substitute one Christian grace for the whole Christian character. We sometimes think this is a mistake which we are in danger of committing. In describing Christian perfection, the sacred writers do, indeed, sometimes select one special grace to illustrate the character of the saint. They select often the grace of love; and they describe Christian perfection by the maturity of love; and they tell us, as the proof that love is mature, that "it casteth out fear." But then, the maturity of love supposes and depends upon the maturity of other graces besides love; and if we confine our views exclusively to this, we may be liable to mistake in sentiment and in practice too. In order to Christian perfection, maturity in knowledge as well as maturity in love is to be sought. It implies the perfection of our faith—the perfection of our hope as well as the perfection of our charity.

Once more, let us remember, in going on unto Christian perfection, that the terms employed here and by other sacred writers have a definite meaning, and describe a state to be attained in the present world. Do the sacred writers exhort us to mortify the deeds of the body? They assure us, also, that the flesh, with its affections and lusts, may be crucified and slain. They do not exhort us to a warfare of the successful issue of which there is no prospect. Do they exhort us to "go on unto perfection?" They use the term "perfection" in a definite and in an explicit sense, to describe a state actually attainable in the present life; and with reference to which, we may have as clear views and as satisfactory experience as we have in regard to the principles of the doctrine of Christ. We understand what we mean, when we apply the term "perfection" to vegetable productions. Vegetable productions are perfect when they have reached their proper size—when they possess all their qualities in a perfect state—there is a law beyond which it cannot pass. We know what we mean, when we speak of the perfection of the human nature. When we speak of the maturity and manhood of a rational being, we

attach precise ideas to the expression. What the characters of the understanding of a man, as distinguished from the understanding of a child are, is not difficult for us to ascertain; and though the maturity of manhood does not preclude improvement, yet it does designate a precise and explicit state. Now, so it is with regard to the Christian: we are to "go on unto perfection"—unto the perfection of our faith—until the eye of our faith is purified from every darkening and obscuring film, is vigorous and clear in its perceptions, and the discoveries made to it are constantly and incessantly enlarging. As to the faculty of understanding, also, we are to seek to be men. We are to go on to perfection of love—and love is perfect when it absorbs all the powers of the soul, fixing them upon God—when it excludes every contrary propensity, and when we love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves. But with regard to all those subjects, it is the privilege of the Christian—and there we leave the matter—to seek and to have the constant teaching of the Holy Spirit—that "unction from the Holy One" which will make every matter plain to him, as far as present duty renders it desirable; and therefore, above all things, a spirit of docility and prayer should be inculcated upon us in all our religious pursuits.

I proceed, lastly, in a very few words, to enforce upon you the exhortation of the text—"Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection." And how shall I enforce the exhortation? I will enforce it, first, by reminding you that *your safety depends upon your obedience to the admonition of the text*. If you would not be forsaken by first principles, you must leave them; if you would not make a retrograde movement in religion, you must seek to advance. The only term upon which you retain the possession of that which you now enjoy, is, that you profit by the talents intrusted to you, and set them out to proper use. Indolence is the first step towards declension; spiritual declension will be followed by apostacy, provided

we persevere in it; and the only security against final apostacy, against the total abandonment of our religious creed, and the entire loss of our enjoyments, is in Christian diligence. The history of every backslider will illustrate this remark, and the awful possibility of backsliding, finally and fatally, should impress it upon us. It is awfully possible, not only that an individual may lose the cheering sense of the Divine favour, but that he may doubt the reality of his past experience; that, from doubting the reality of his past experience, he may go on to question the truth of all spiritual religion, that he may treat the whole as visionary and enthusiastic; and that, to use the strong language of the apostle Peter, he may "forget that he was purged from his former sins"—that the sense which memory retains, or might retain, of past enjoyments, is so totally obliterated, that no trace remains, no intellectual perception of spiritual things; and in the utter void and darkness of a spirit, thus abandoned by the light and comforts of the Holy Ghost, skepticism, unbelief, take up their abode, and the last estate of that man will often become much worse than the first! With regard to faith in divine things, it has in it very much the quality of a moral virtue. That faith which Christianity requires is not necessarily produced by the force of evidence addressed to the understanding; it depends very much upon the state of the affections, and resides in the heart, viewed on the whole, as much as it does, or perhaps more than it does, in the understanding; and unfaithfulness to religious light and enjoyments will very frequently conduct us to speculative infidelity. Now, our safety depends on our Christian diligence; and if we do not desire, if we do not wish to lose entirely the mental perception and the satisfying conviction of first principles, let us leave them, and "go on unto perfection."

Must I enforce upon you the exhortation of the text? Then I will do it, secondly, by reminding you that *the value of all your past attainments depends upon the application which you make of them to future possessions.* You believe in the

Son of God—on what does the value of faith depend? It depends on the interest which it gives you in the sacrifice and intercession of Christ—it depends on the union which it establishes between you and the Son of God. And upon what does the value of that interest depend? and why is that union with the Son of God to be prized? Why, because that relation to the Son of God will conduct you to the possession of divine nature and into the enjoyment of conformity to the Son of God. Now, to detach faith from the great end of it—to separate the knowledge we have acquired of principles from the important truths to which they are intended to conduct, is to deprive them altogether of their value. You admit the importance of prayer—you have often felt the consolations which it imparts; in trouble it has been to you a place of refuge, and in weakness it has been your strength: you know a way to the throne of grace. On what does the value of that knowledge depend? You have put into your hands a privilege which, if rightly exercised and improved, may command all the blessings of the new covenant. You have learned to pray that you may "pray without ceasing;" you have had the mental eye of faith opened, that there may be spread before it all the wonders of spiritual sight here, and, finally, all the surpassing glories of the beatific vision hereafter; you have tasted the sweets of communion with God that you may be excited to aspire after more intimate and uninterrupted fellowship with him; you have felt the powers of the world to come, that you may be encouraged to go on till you are made perfectly meet for the inheritance of the saints in light! Of what value is an acquaintance with the alphabet of Christianity unless we make an application of this knowledge to further attainments in it?

Must I still enforce upon you the exhortation of the text? Then, thirdly, I will remind you, that *a regard to the credit of religion and your own consistency of character, should induce you to attend to it.* Is religion valuable in any degree? Then it must certainly be valua-

ble in the highest degree in which it can be attained. There is nothing noxious in religious knowledge—it is impossible that our desires after holiness can be excessive, and that our ambition to be distinguished by a full conformity to Christ can be too absorbing and ardent. Here the largest desires are laudable—here the most vigorous exertions are to be commended; and as we consult the credit of the Christianity which we profess, we ought to be desirous of making a fair representation of it to the world around us. And how can we do so unless we have ourselves attained to “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ?” We are to “let our light so shine before men”—it is said—“that they, seeing our good works, may be led to glorify our Father who is in heaven.” But you know very well, that with regard to spiritual productions, as with regard to natural productions, generally speaking, their beauty is not reached till their maturity is reached. The bloom, the beauty of the tree, is not perfect till the fruit is ripe—the beauty and symmetry of the man is not exhibited, till his full stature and proportions have been reached. So it is with the Christian—the fair exhibition to the world of the beauty of holiness, of the loveliness of the Christian character, is not to be expected but in the case of those who have attained its perfection. “Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” and do them. Let all these, beautifully blended together, be the ornament of your character, that others may glorify your Father who is in heaven. Let your humility be freed from all meanness of spirit—let your benevolence be purified from all selfishness; seek for that dignity of the Christian character, which is entirely removed from all pride; and remember that the mixture of selfish and corrupt affections with spiritual graces, has a tendency to debase the quality of them, as it prevents their growth and full expression.

Must I enforce still further the exhortation of the text? Then I will do it by

another argument, and that is drawn from *the influence which Christian diligence will have on the character of your closing hours*. If we desire that our death should be honourable to the religion we profess—if we wish to make a triumphant as well as a peaceful exit—a joyful as well as a safe one, then let us remember that, generally speaking, the character of death-bed scenes is determined by the diligence, by the fidelity of our previous lives. Many conflicts which disturb the repose of the dying saint would be spared, if he were, in his earlier stages, more conscientiously faithful in the duties of the Christian warfare; much self-reproach—many painful fears—many distressing doubts, which too often cast a gloom over the closing scene of his earthly pilgrimage, would have—many of them—been avoided, had he attended to this exhortation of the apostle. Do you desire to have “an entrance ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?” Then, remember the direction which precedes that passage—“Giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” What a fine exposition of the text before us! “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: *for so* an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” Your exit shall be the exit of a conqueror, your last expressions shall be notes of triumph.

Shall I still enforce the exhortation of the text? Then I will do it by reminding you, finally, that Christian diligence will have a favourable influence on our future state as well as upon our present condition. We sometimes give death credit for effecting a greater alteration in

the intellectual and spiritual state of a Christian, than it deserves. I say this is possible. At any rate, the degree of future glory—the splendour of our future crown—the weight and magnitude of our recompense, will be determined by the degree of our fidelity and of our Christian diligence. Borrowing, then, the allusion from the words of the text, I ask you, on what form in the heavenly school, do you intend, when you enter it, to take your seat? Do you mean there to go into the alphabet class? you begin there where you leave off here. Where do you intend to begin? with what class of the celestial inhabitants do you desire hereafter to be associated? Will you always be in the rear? or do you desire to take the foremost rank among the inhabitants of the celestial world? According to your diligence and fidelity now, will be your future attainments—according to the zeal you manifest in the seed-time, will be the returns you shall, under the Spirit, receive in the time of the harvest. Let us, then, “leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and go on unto perfection.” “And this will we do, if God permit.” Let ours not be the state of those described in the verses following the text—“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.” “But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.” Let us, therefore, all use “the same diligence to the

full assurance of hope unto the end!”  
And may God grant us this grace!  
Amen.

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ON MORAL EVIDENCE

THE evidences of Christianity are of a rational nature. They address themselves neither to the feelings nor passions of men. Had not this been the case, the minds of men would have been over-awed and their belief extorted by terror. Moral evidence is of all others the best fitted to answer as a test by which to try the sincerity of our faith. The clear light of demonstration, or any kind of evidence which men might be disposed to regard as irresistible, would be ill adapted for the trial of our understandings on practical questions, because it would lead to right conduct in opposition to the greatest insincerity of mind. Were a man to be raised from the dead in order to attest the truth of Christianity, and were he to operate immediate conviction on the mind of the person to whom he made his appearance, where would there be a permanent test of the sincerity of his belief? Assent would be extorted by fear, the faculties of the mind would be put to no trial. Hence it appears that moral evidence is best suited to our circumstances, as it puts our faith to a constant trial. Of this kind is the evidence actually furnished in support of Christianity. It is addressed to the intellectual faculties; it calls for the full exercise of the judgment and whole reasoning powers; and it is fitted to produce a rational and permanent conviction so powerful as to triumph over the suggestions of carnal reason, and the sudden bursts of irregular passions or of animal feeling.—*Burns.*

## SERMON III.

THE EMPLOYMENT OF ANGELS.

BY THE REV. JAMES MACFARLANE, A.M.

MINISTER OF STOCKBRIDGE CHAPEL, EDINBURGH.

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*“Which things the angels desire to look into.”—1 Pet. i. 12.*

WE need scarcely remind you how richly the temple service of old was fraught with the intimations of a coming Messiah; nor need we remark how every department of the temple itself, constructed as it was on a divine model, bore some pointed reference to the great blessings of redemption. Into no portion of its precincts can we enter which is not filled with the holiest inspirations—to no corner, whether of its outer court or of its inmost recess, can we turn, which does not speak of a higher and more spiritual economy than what the bleeding victim, or the smoking incense, might at first seem to indicate. You know, for instance, for Scripture informs you, that the holy of holies was a type of heaven, whither the great Forerunner has now gone with the blood of sprinkling to offer up the prayers of all saints. You know, too, that the mercy-seat which covered the ark wherein lay the book of the law, was a type of Jesus, whom God has set forth as a true mercy-seat, and who covers and shelters his people from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them. Now, you will observe, that over this mercy-seat were placed two cherubim overshadowing it with their wings, looking down upon the ark with bended head, the posture of deep contemplation, as if there was that there which called forth their most powerful sympathy, and exercised their most fixed attention. Hence, it could not but happen that the devout Jew, whose mind rose from the shadow to the substance, and from the type to the reality, would

view this figure as intimating the fact, that the angels in heaven are no indifferent spectators of the development of the plan of mercy, but that their eyes are fixed upon it, as though there were nothing else in the whole circle of creation which could, in comparison, call forth their regards. To us, at least, who live in a clearer and more perfect dispensation, there is no mystery or doubt as to the studies and employments of the celestial throng. It is our privilege to know that the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow, are the common ground of meditation on which saint and angel meet, and that the loudest song of the redeemed on earth is but the faint echo of that anthem in heaven, which seraphs, and the spirits of the just made perfect, conspire in singing to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever. It is our privilege to discover, in the covenant of grace, a chain of sympathy which binds heaven to earth, a centre of union around which the holiest thoughts of men, and the highest exercises of angels, ever circulate; for though the message of its unsearchable riches is falling here with but little impression on the ears of a listless and alienated world, the finger of inspiration points us to a scene where those lofty intelligences who live in the light of the upper sanctuary, whose faculties are developed most widely, and whose affections glow most intensely, are expending their deepest regards on the great mysteries of redemption. This is the one sub-

ject of all others which thrills heaven with rapture, and lays angels and arch-angels prostrate before the throne of the Eternal. This is that field of glory whose height no manifestation can display, and whose depth no created being, however exalted, can fully comprehend. This is the golden treasury of mercy on which the fixed gaze of the cherubim has for ages been turned, and from the fulness of which they draw such fresh supplies of knowledge as are adequate to the utmost measure of their still expanding capacities. They feel no weariness—they know no decay. Infinity is the only range, and eternity the only period, of their investigations. They have long basked in the effulgence of the beatific vision, and still as time revolves do they desire to look into these things, without danger of exhausting their powers, and without the possibility of terminating their inquiries.

At the threshold of such a subject the question at once occurs, How is it that the heavenly host contemplate the work of man's salvation with so much interest? And in answer, we remark, *first*, THAT IT IS BECAUSE THEY OBTAIN HERE THEIR MOST EXTENSIVE VIEW OF THE GLORY OF GOD.

We mean not from this to say, that angels are not awake to the glories which are so profusely scattered over all existence, as to be observed by men of every country, and kindred, and clime. Dwelling in the heaven of heavens, and as the messengers of God, in which capacity we have reason from Scripture to believe that they visit not only this world, but the innumerable planets which steal along the face of the sky, they have the most ample and perfect opportunity of understanding the endless multitude and the astonishing character of the works of creation and providence. Nature, in all its diversified operations, lies stretched out before them, and from the throne of their Creator, they behold a golden chain of bounty which leaves no world beyond its embrace, and no creature beyond its control. Would they trace wisdom in the minute, or power in the magnificent? Would they scan Jehovah's ways in the movements of the material universe, or in the even tenor of his providence? Would they see, in the

vicissitude of seasons, the superintendence of a faithful friend, and the bounty of an unwearied benefactor, or meet the footsteps of a parent in the worlds he had formed, and the arm of a Creator working visibly on the right hand and the left? they have but to turn from earth to heaven, and from heaven to earth; they have but to survey the new Jerusalem, the capital of all creation, or contemplate those wandering worlds which are balanced on the emptiness of space; they have but to gaze on the solid earth, or the rolling seas, and everywhere will they behold the skirts of that robe of glory with which the Deity is clothed; everywhere will they behold wisdom, and goodness, and power, portrayed in characters too bright to be mistaken. Yes! the foundation of the temple of knowledge is laid deep, and wide, and lasting, on the face of the universe. All creatures, whether animate or inanimate, demonstrate the being and perfections of Him who formed them; and it cannot be supposed that those sons of God who raised the song of triumph as they saw Omnipotence calling this world into existence, should ever forget that shout of joy with which they hailed the birth of time, or cease to admire the wonders of creation throughout the endless progress of their being. But nature, with all its lessons of wisdom, must now yield to grace; and the era, when this fair system arose at the divine command, must not vie with that, when, from condemnation and misery, it emerged into happiness and peace. Every other theme of study must fade away before it, and acknowledge the supremacy of an enterprise, the very object of which is "glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good-will to men." This constitutes the bright centre to which all the divine attributes converge, and from which they are again reflected over the intelligent universe. This forms the choicest spot on which, amid much that is great and glorious, the eye of angels most instructively dwells.

It must not, however, be supposed that this superiority consists in any thing of outward grandeur or external magnificence. There is little in the manger of Bethlehem, or in the company of fisher-

men—little in the judgment hall of Pilate or in the hill of Calvary—little either in the commencement or in the evolution of that plan of grace, which, from eternity, had been folded up in the bosom of Deity, that is calculated to attract the carnal eye, or to arrest the carnal attention. Attended with no external majesty, the cross of Christ was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness, and it perhaps might have been imagined that angels would have concurred in the estimate, and that the heavenly throng would have turned away from such an uninviting scene to seek for occupation in other spheres and in other studies. But we look, and the calculation is reversed. As a scheme of grace in which the glory of God is manifested, through the medium of every thing that is awful and striking, the gospel is replete with much on which the soul of the believer feeds as its richest repast, and in that man of sorrows, in that weeping babe and dying victim, the principalities of heaven beheld the most glorious object in the whole created universe, because in him the perfections of Deity shine forth in their most stupendous exhibition. The veil of flesh and the guise of a servant, hide not from them the majesty of God, nor in the indignities of Calvary can they forget—a finished work—a perfect redemption. Their understanding is riveted on those unsearchable riches whereby the guilty fugitive is called back from his apostacy, and invited to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Their affections bow before that sovereign dispensation which overlooked their fallen brethren, and brought the fellow of Jehovah from his throne, and stretched forth the golden sceptre and established a spiritual kingdom in the very recesses of guilt and misery. On every feature of the work glory is described, and from every point the majesty of power and the rectitude of justice, the immutability of truth, and the beauty of holiness beam forth in lines of undying light. Does it not preserve untainted the dignity of a violated law, and the majesty of offended Godhead? Does it not unfold the depth of human wretchedness, and let in the brightness of an-

other region on the darkness and the poverty of this? Does it not offer more than all the riches of this globe could purchase, or the services of all the seraphim in heaven could earn? What more than a crucified Saviour could angels wish to behold; to what theme but salvation could the regards of time, or the studies of immortality, most instructively turn? Every divine attribute has here its demands satisfied, its claims vindicated, and its essential dignity displayed and exalted. All harmoniously unite, and each lends its aid and co-operation in ennobling the other; wisdom dignified by power, and power regulated by wisdom; mercy sustained and invigorated by justice, and justice tempered by the meltings of love—grace establishing its throne on the basis of Jehovah's truth, and the warm tide of mercy's beams mingling with, and pervading all. O what an exhibition of every divine perfection is unfolded here! Who can expatiate over this field of divine goodness and compassion, and not call upon his soul, and all that is within him, to bless the Lord? Take the highest creature in the universe, darken the light of creation around him, give him all the powers which earth or heaven can supply, and let him bend those powers to this one effort—the knowledge of a salvation wrought out for ruined man—and how much will he learn? As much as to lay him prostrate before the throne in the heavens; as much as to convince him that the measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. Ages, as they pass over him, still find him at the task, breathing the fervent prayer, "Lord, show me thy glory;" and eternity, as it rolls on, will still witness him gazing on an ocean whose depth no line may fathom, and whose bounds no eye may reach.

Nor will the interest with which angels survey the great mystery of redemption, as displaying the perfections of Deity, lose any thing in its intensity when we reflect that it is of a growing character, depending on the gradual development of the plan of mercy. The mind of man can seldom rest for any period of time on a study, however elevated, which is not

increasing the boundaries of his knowledge, or rewarding him with fresh information; and it perhaps might be supposed, that had the intimations of God's purposes, to the human race, been as familiar to the angels at their beginning as at their close, they would long ere now have tired in the contemplation of a subject which was ever presenting the same unvarying aspect. But, believing as we do from our text, especially when compared with the context, and with other passages of Scripture, that this knowledge is of a growing nature, and that they, as well as we, only learn the several parts of this design of grace in their successive accomplishment, it is at once manifest that the celestial company are perpetually alive to a subject which is gradually disclosing, with broader and more defined features, its purposes of mercy. The church on earth was the groundwork on which were inscribed the praises of the living God, in order, as the apostle informs us, that by that church his manifold wisdom might be made known in heavenly places. The wells of salvation from which the saints below ever drew their supplies of knowledge and of strength, were the common resort of angels, and amid type and ceremony, from a bleeding victim and smoking incense, from the ark and the mercy-seat, from the prophet's school and the high priest's temple; they too, we may well conclude, were gathering up those bright intimations which strung their harps to a higher melody, and tuned their songs to a loftier praise. What, with them, is knowledge now, was thus perhaps at one period but mystery and gloom. Who can tell what silence reigned in heaven when, by the fall of Adam, the harmony of all creation had been broken, and God himself, in the awful majesty of holiness, stood ready to pronounce his threatened award? What could angels expect for man in that hour of apostacy, but the full measure of insulted wrath, and the miseries of an irreversible decree? And, O! when the uplifted arm was stayed, and no voice but that of mercy was heard, saying, "Deliver from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom," who can say with what holy joy they welcomed the intima-

tion, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head? It was now that a field of knowledge, as yet untrodden, was opened up before them, a field over whose shadowy outline the dimness of futurity still partially rested. It might be, that with patriarchs and prophets of old, they looked to the day of Christ when yet afar off, and that, like the early travellers, they were cheered by some few streaks of the rising sun; yet was it to them but the faint presage of the opening day. It might be, that with Noah, and Abraham, and Moses, they desired to see; yet were they not able clearly to discern the face of Jehovah's mercy, shrouded, as it was, beneath the covering of a typical economy. It might be, that with the very followers of the Lamb, they traced the footsteps of their own King on earth, and watched over him at Bethlehem, and ministered to him in the wilderness, and comforted him in the garden of Gethsemane; yet still, in the fulness of the latter day, ere the consummation had arrived, God alone knew how Judas should betray, and Pilate condemn, and the Jews crucify, the Prince of peace. Not yet is the vision full; not yet is the harvest reaped. The years, as they sweep over our world, and bring to pass the purposes of Jehovah, are extending the boundaries of angelic wisdom, and though surrounded with a blaze of glory, visibly gathered from every point of a finished redemption, the loftiest spirit who surrounds the throne is still travelling in the great circle of knowledge, like the planets in their course, unfettered in his movements, and unsullied in his progress. His zeal dreads not the languor of weariness, nor his pursuits the inroads of decay. Every new view is yielding God a fresh revenue of praise, and still does he desire to look into it, that he may show forth the greatness of Him who stepped forth to our aid unsolicited and uncalled, except by the tender accents of his own unmerited grace.

*Secondly.* We remark, THAT IT IS NOT MERELY IN A SPECULATIVE POINT OF VIEW THAT ANGELS CONTEMPLATE THE GREAT WORK OF REDEMPTION, BUT THAT THEY DESIRE TO LOOK INTO THESE THINGS, BE-

CAUSE OF THE GOOD WHICH THEREBY RESULTS TO THE HUMAN RACE. Men and angels once belonged to the same peaceful family, and had no tempter interfered to mar the harmony of their union, they had still lived in the bonds of a holy and happy fellowship. At the birth of time, no impediment existed to the spontaneous flow of social affection, or to the intercourse of heaven and of earth. The voice of the Lord God was hailed with delight; and as there was no disposition in man to hide himself from his presence, so was there nothing to arrest the footsteps of angels, or destroy the congeniality of kindred feeling. Our world was not yet degenerate, but reflecting in its every scene the beauty and the holiness of the upper sphere, the very angels smiled upon it as the home of brethren whose souls burned with a common love to the great Parent of all. But when man revolted from his lawful Sovereign—when conscious guilt abashed Adam in the presence of a pure Being, and made him desirous of hiding himself from his view, not only did sin separate between man and God, but shut up the very gates of heaven to the egress of the celestial host. Henceforward the chain which bound together the intelligent creation, was snapped asunder, and, dissevered from the harmony of the moral universe, our globe became a prodigal in the family of God. Henceforward happiness gave place to misery, holiness to sin, and far from the abode of his innocence, our great progenitor saw the flaming sword of the once friendly cherubim, guarding the place where he had talked with God, even as one friend talketh with another. We cannot, therefore, but suppose, that as the friends and lovers of mankind, who take an emphatical pleasure in all that advances our happiness, the angels should desire to contemplate a scheme which has again reunited us to their company, and by destroying the works of the devil, holds out the blessedness of Eden, under circumstances of still greater serenity and peace. We cannot but suppose, that, next to the glory of God, they should be mindful of the salvation of man; and that while they seek in the mysteries of grace, a more

distinct knowledge of the perfections of Deity than creation yields, they should not rejoice the less in these discoveries of Godhead, because they have changed the moral aspect of our world, and again opened up a channel, through which the sympathies of heaven may flow out over the habitations of earth. If angels weep, they must have wept over that act of apostacy which drove man an exile from paradise; and if they rejoice, it must be to behold him no longer presenting that image of sin, with which their holy spirits can hold no alliance. The miracles of grace are to them no mean or uninviting spectacle. That reconciliation cannot be neglected which satisfied divine justice, and from the smitten rock poured forth those healing streams which a broken law had dried at their source. That salvation cannot be overlooked, which is working a radical cure in the very centre and seat of the malady, cleansing the fountain of corruption, renovating the very constituent faculties of the human mind, and constraining them to a pure and holy service. Because visited by its influence, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life—all lose their charms when contrasted with the requirements of the moral law. Because touched by its reviving energy, the believer springs from the cell of condemnation and the embrace of death, into all the holy activity, and living beauty, and usefulness of the regenerate man. The veil is removed which eclipsed the glories of the world to come; the fetters of passion are burst asunder, iniquity is abandoned, the love of God cherished, and with the joy of Christ in his heart, and his praise on his lips, the once abandoned transgressor sinks to the grave, rich in all those spiritual endowments which can support the soul in the hour of death or prepare it for the communion and happiness of heaven. "Old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new." Over the whole inner man, the influences of heaven breathe once more, displaying themselves in their loveliest forms, and in their highest glory. Once more does the flame of devotion burn, and prayer

delight to make known its request, and praise to offer up its incense of thanksgiving, and faith, though not sight, to welcome the presence of Him whose face he shall yet behold in righteousness, and be satisfied with his likeness. Once more does the disencumbered spirit rise upwards to its proper good, and, amid the remembrance of miseries escaped, and the anticipation of mercies in reserve, pant for the hour when, freed from all corruption, it shall be raised in its attachments to a congeniality with a holier and happier sphere. This is the glory; these are the triumphs of the gospel; and, impressed with their greatness, they who once watched the earthly paradise, the messengers of wo, now celebrate the change with all the benevolence of gratulation and joy, and desire to contemplate a scheme which, like the ladder of Jacob, is binding the throne to the footstool by imparting to both the harmony of one great and peaceful throng.

In adopting such an argument, it must not be thought that we are travelling beyond the range of Scripture, and indulging in the mere wanderings of fancy, which may, or may not, have their origin in truth. We know that there "is joy" in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, thus intimating that the very seraphs notice and rejoice at the success of that process on character which conforms man to the image of Christ, and that this, more than any other cause, conspires to scatter blessedness over the celestial plains. Bound to a holy obedience by the distinct apprehension which they have of the supreme excellence of that Being in whose presence they dwell, they know the peace which flows out upon them who are admitted to his fellowship; and this knowledge must doubtless be accompanied with the conviction of the extreme wretchedness of those who rebel against the majesty of heaven. Living in the purity of the upper sanctuary, they drink pleasure at the fountain head, and belonging to the government of Jehovah, they owe and pay to him an unlimited love and obedience. Their minds, then, on the one hand, must be fully awake to the exceed-

ing sinfulness of sin, and, on the other, their very loyalty must serve to augment their joy, when Satan is defeated, and man restored; so that we cannot assign too much importance to the idea, that the blessings with which redemption is fraught, is an incitement to their study in the celestial world. The gospel is the seed which, lodged in the heart, gradually produces a new creature—a seal which, stamped on the soul, leaves the deep and abiding impression of the divine image—a light chasing away the shadow of darkness—the rod of Christ's strength and the sceptre of his might, by which he bends the nations before him, and subdues unto himself a peculiar people in the day of his power. The ministry of reconciliation is the moral lever, which is raising our world from the depth of misery into which it had sunk—the great resurrection which is gathering into one the dispersed members of Christ's body—the stream which, issuing from the throne, is running through the dry places of this earth, reflecting from its peaceful bosom many a smiling village and Christian shrine. Instead of holding forth a single cup of water to the fainting pilgrim, it has opened up a fountain in the desert, to which nations repair; instead of sheltering itself amid the ruins of Jehovah's sanctuary, it recognises no other limits but those of the globe; it scorns a narrower temple than the earth and the skies. United in the sympathy of a common faith, and touched by the inspiration of the same Spirit, the sons of the stranger are howing down before it, and from their numberless habitations, are sending forth the high praises of God and of the Lamb. Here the dark understanding has been illumined; there the rebellious will has been softened; here the troubled conscience has been tranquillized; there the depraved affections have been sanctified. The prejudices of the idolater have fallen before the wisdom of the just; the pride of the philosopher has humbled itself before the Spirit of truth; the profligate Gentile and the bigoted Jew have become the willing subjects of the Prince of peace. Yet a little while, and all flesh shall come before the Lord; yet a

little, and the human heart shall become an holy altar, and this earth one great temple, in which the children of men are made meet to join in the new song, and to mingle with the innumerable company of angels in the Zion above. Even now has the decree gone forth, and this central fire, this mighty reservoir of spiritual light, is but awaiting the divine command, to burst up in splendour, to disperse the gloom, and consume the impurities of a degenerate world.

It is not to be wondered, then, that they who rejoiced over man's birth, and, it may be, wept at his fall—who sung the descent of peace on earth, and are still the heralds of the good news of repentance to their fellow spirits in the heavenly kingdom, should desire to contemplate an object thus full of mercy to the human race. It were unnatural to conclude, that amid all the joys of their father's house the inhabitants of heaven should not desire to look into those mysteries which have for their end such a change of character, and such a transformation of will as assimilate man to God, and the worship of the footstool to the nobler services which encircle the throne. Deeply imbued with seraphic love, there is no delusion in the idea that they enjoy all the luxury of philanthropic affection as time discloses the fresh trophies of redeeming grace. Accustomed to look upon the whole human family with a benign aspect, there is no presumption in the thought that they turn their attention to that treasure house of mercy which is scattering so many blessings on our path, that they bend an attentive eye on the progress of the gospel—that they sympathize with the toils of those holy men who have borne the ark of the true God into the lonely wilderness, and that they are waiting for the era when the kingdoms of this earth shall become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ. Nor as eternity runs on, can it be imagined that the highest archangel should forget that love which is gathering up all that is fair and holy out from the ruins of the tomb, and the deeper ruins of the fall, and in the new Jerusalem is more than realizing the harmony and the peace of Eden.

*In conclusion. Are these the studies and employments of angels?* Then, my friends, we would turn this day from heaven to earth, and remind you, that, if destined to become their companions hereafter, you must be associated with them in spirit and in character now. This world is a nursery, in the distant soil of which the spiritual plant is reared, until removed to adorn the paradise of God, and it is impossible that they should have any meetness for its pure pleasures and its exalted society, who are total strangers to all those ardent affections which religion demands. And yet it is melancholy to think how little this world, amid its bustling pursuits, is reflecting the exercises of heaven—how to a wicked generation the empty vanities of time and sense have a more exquisite relish than that bread of life with which angels are replenished through eternal ages. It is mournful to hear the scoffing of the ungodly, while the highest intelligences wonder and adore—to behold the lofty attitude of unconcern with which men listen to that which is the study and the delight of principalities and powers. Why this great dissimilarity of moral taste between seraphs who bow before the throne and creatures who dwell upon the footstool? Why should the man whose soul burns at the contemplation of nature going forth in her majesty, feel no holy love as he traces the living footsteps of heavenly grace? Why should the philanthropist, whose eye kindles at the mention of an enterprise which has touched the chains of the captive and bid the slave go free, turn away with aversion from that sublime undertaking which, more than all the bounties of creation, is fraught with mercy to the human race? And, above all, why is it that the philosopher and the sensualist, the worldly and the profane, start from their appropriate occupation to fling the sneer of ridicule against him who dares to break the frivolous current of ordinary converse, by adverting to the glad tidings of salvation as the main-spring of his hope and joy? If angels tremble, 'tis at such a sight. This sad neglect of every thing which ought to occupy the attention, is as clear as it is tremendous. This dis-

cordance between the employments of heaven and the pursuits of earth, is disqualifying man for the pure services of the upper temple, where the triumphs of the cross are felt as the most animating subject of delight. Nay, to you they are not only important as a matter of study, but as a matter of deep and serious interest. It is on your account that angels desire to look into these things, and if you seek to neglect them on your own, nothing can be expected for you but a "certain fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation to devour the adversaries." As then you would not perish in the vision of light the most clear, and advantages the most distinguishing—as you would enjoy somewhat of the glories and the felicities of the upper sphere in this the house of your pilgrimage, we would call upon you to make the blessings of redemption all your salvation and all your desire. To sit in faith beneath the shadow of the cross—to derive by the ministration of the Spirit all our hope and happiness from the inestimable merits of the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne—to cast anchor on the covenant favour and covenant faithfulness of Father, Son, and Spirit, are the grand and only sources of holiness and joy. Without these you cannot enter the kingdom of God—without these you have no meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, must stand eclipsed by the riches of the cross, or in the midst of rejoicing hosts, you would still be wretched and sigh again for the scenes you had left. The song of salvation must be learned now, or the Spirits of the just made perfect, shrinking from your presence, would seek some purer spot in the realms of space, where no jarring voice would mar the melody of their heavenly anthem. Wherefore "how shall you escape, if you neglect this great salvation?" Amen.

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ON THE PRINCIPLE OF BENEVOLENCE.

A PRINCIPLE of heavenly benevolence is invariably produced in the heart of a Christian, when the gospel, received by

faith, becomes the power of God to his salvation. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." To this gracious principle may be traced the religious institutions which have blessed, and which are now blessing, our land of Christian light and privilege. Yet the increase of these institutions have been received with distrust, as though they must, of necessity, exert an injurious influence upon the modes of charity, long established and unquestionably useful. Now this objection cannot be valid, unless the means already employed to supply the wants of men, and especially the wants of their perishing souls, are sufficiently ample for the purpose. But the wants of society, like the numbers of which it is composed, are continually increasing, and like its features, continually varying. If, indeed, the means of Christian mercy could not be extended, however enlarged its spirit, the multiplication of societies, claiming its exercise, would necessarily produce a diminution of assistance to those already in operation. But when the kingdom of heaven is established by divine grace in the heart, the means of a holy liberality are invariably extended; because every temporal possession is then regarded as a talent lent by the Most High, for the promotion of his own glory, and for the good of his creatures. "A new commandment," said the Redeemer, "I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." Now the affection of the Son of God towards lost transgressors was universal. He did not refuse to cleanse the leper, because he had raised the dead:—nor did he turn away from the importunate cry of the blind, because he had unstopped the ears of the deaf, or had made the lame to walk. In like manner, while the ingenuity of Christian benevolence delights to invent new schemes of mercy, its expansiveness includes those already appealing to its protection. Indeed, such diffusive liberality is the necessary result of divine appointment: for God hath said, "The poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore thou shalt open thy hand wide to thy brother."—*Buddicom*.

## SERMON IV.

ON THE RESTORATION OF THE JEWS TO THEIR OWN LAND, AND CONVERSION TO THE FAITH OF CHRIST.

BY THE REV. JOHN GORDON LORIMER,

MINISTER OF ST. DAVID'S CHURCH, GLASGOW.



*"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time, to recover the remnant of his people which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim."—Isaiah xi. 11—13.*

You are all aware of the object of our present meeting. I have been requested and prevailed upon, though surrounded by many much better qualified, to preach the annual sermon in behalf of the Glasgow Society for promoting Christianity among the Jews. In fulfilling this engagement, it seems natural and desirable to make choice of a subject which is directly connected with the Jews. The claims of other societies may be advocated without much special reference to their object; but the arguments in behalf of this society are, like the people themselves, peculiar, and the subject requires a peculiar treatment. Nor is this the less called for, that there seems to be no little indifference felt, and misapprehension entertained, as to the Jewish cause, considered as a whole. There is much connected with the Jews which would supply us with an important and interesting theme of contemplation—there is little, indeed, connected with their history and prospects which might not be so improved; but the theme to which I would at present restrict your attention is, their future conversion to the faith of Christ, and restoration to their own land. This theme is a very pleasing one—much more pleasing than many parts of their history. The consideration of it will tend

to enlarge our acquaintance with Scripture; and, I trust, it will be found not inappropriate to the benevolent object of this meeting, but fruitful in motives and encouragements to induce us to contribute to the christianization of so remarkable a people.

None, I presume, need to be told who the Jews are: all, even the least informed, are pretty well aware of their origin and history. By the early reading of the Scriptures, they are introduced to our knowledge at a tender age: we frequently read of them in maturer years; nay, as faithful students of the Scriptures, they are continually brought before us in some aspect of their character or history. We often hear of them from travellers and others; and sometimes we behold a few of this people with our own eyes. Many men, who care nothing about religion, and would do little to change the religious state of the Jews, are interested in them as suitable and affecting subjects of poetry and history; and, through the medium of these, impart that interest to others. In this way, there are few, I believe, who have not a better general idea of the past history and present character of the Jews, than perhaps of any other people. The very singularity of the Jews; their standing out, in all important respects, from

every other nation under heaven, renders the knowledge of them deeper and more memorable. On these grounds it may not seem necessary, nor is it so, to enter into any enlarged accounts of them. We take for granted, that you are acquainted with the past and present state of the Jews. We shall only give such a brief and general sketch as may recall your previous knowledge, and better fit you to contemplate their future prospects.

You will remember, then, that, after God had made trial of the dispensation of diffusing the knowledge of divine truth generally among all the families of the earth, though the wickedness of man proved the inefficacy of this plan, he, after the deluge, to show the sovereignty and freedom of his grace, selected a single individual from the heart of an idolatrous family, and constituted him and his posterity the objects of his favour, and the depositories of his truth. Abraham and his descendants, through Isaac, are the favoured individuals. While all the world is left for ages in spiritual darkness, to prove the universal depravity of human nature, and the need of redemption, these individuals are blessed with special protection, and promises, and revelations, and institutions, and are enriched with blessings temporal and spiritual. In order to try their faith, and exercise their graces, and elevate their characters, and make them indirectly the authors of spiritual good to others, their earthly lot is a very checkered one; in punishment of their sin and disobedience, it is now and then a suffering one. At one time, they are nearly consumed with famine; then they are slaves; next they wander as outcasts in a wilderness; ere long they enter the land which has been prepared for them, as triumphant conquerors, the envy and the terror of the surrounding nations. Fresh communications are received from heaven; more stable institutions are founded; direct intercourse with God is upheld; the prophetic word respecting the great Redeemer of the world is enlarged and brightened. Still does this favoured family, now swelled into a nation, prove the power of the same depravity which reigns in the Gentile world around, by ever and

anon rebelling against God, in spite of warning, and expostulation, and judgment. Their history is the history of the richest blessings conferred—partially enjoyed—speedily abused. It is the history of obedience, disobedience, and deliverance, in successive and most varied forms. At length, when many difficulties and many wars had passed away, and the national prosperity reached its height, ten of the Jewish tribes, in punishment of sin, are carried captive to Assyria; and from that captivity they have never returned to the present hour—proclaiming, in their doom, God's hatred of sin, and determination to punish it. The two remaining tribes, after a various experience—now repentant, now rebellious—after long making proof of the power and mercy and forbearance of God, and proclaiming these attributes abroad to others, are visited with a similar captivity. They are carried to Babylon, and for seventy years retained there. At the expiration of the appointed time, they are most wonderfully restored; their temple is rebuilt; their religious character is improved. They successfully contend with their enemies; and, in righteous retribution, these enemies are themselves punished for afflicting God's ancient people.

The day of the long-promised Messiah draws near. The prophecies, often repeated, become clearer and more numerous as their fulfilment approaches. There is a pause in the book of prophecy, and a pause throughout the world; and, amid universal and excited expectation, the Son of God, the Mediator of mankind, descends. Every prediction is fulfilled—every type meets its antitype; but, strange to tell, the Jews receive and acknowledge not the claims of their King. In bitter disappointment and malignant envy, they, with the exception of a small, but sufficient, class of witnesses from their number, reject him. They hate, and scorn, and persecute, and calumniate him, from his cradle to his grave; they actually crucify him, and pray that his blood may be upon them and their children. Their prayer is heard. They continue to oppress and persecute the servants and church, as they oppressed and perse-

cutted the Master and the Head; and, in forty years, agreeably to the prophetic warnings, Jerusalem, their beloved city, is destroyed—their temple levelled with the dust—all their distinctive religious institutions and privileges swept away—multitudes of them slain and crucified, after the manner of Him whom they crucified—multitudes enslaved, and all dispersed and scattered to the four winds of heaven—sometimes denied even the privilege to visit their native land, and weep among its ruins. Ever since the period referred to, down to the present moment, the Jews have been exiles and wanderers. They have had no political existence among the kingdoms of the earth—they have been scattered in all countries, even the most distant—they are to be found in all climates and states of society.

And in all lands the *treatment* which they have received has been substantially the same. In righteous punishment of their awful crime, they have been made a proverb and a by-word, till their very name is a reproach. They have been spoiled, and oppressed, and massacred, by Heathen, and Mahomedan, and Roman Catholic, and nominal Christian—they have been ground to the dust for ages, and that often by nations who knew not their sin. Their history is one uniform history of suffering, and oppression, and despoliation, unrelieved by one solitary exception, softened only somewhat in these latter days by the progress of society, and the humanizing influences of the gospel; and yet, in a great measure, this treatment has been unprovoked on the part of the Jews. False pretexts have often been got up to shelter the aggressors. The Jews have often been accused of crimes which they never committed, and of which their persecutors knew that they were innocent; but this only proves more clearly and impressively that the judgment is from God.

And while the Jews have been thus scattered and persecuted, they have continued to preserve themselves separate from all other people. There are instances of men being worn out by persecution, and of their sentiments dying with them;

but the Jews have never been so worn out. In spite of all the fires of persecution, they are probably at this moment as numerous as ever; they have adhered to their peculiarities in all ages. Though, consulting their safety, it would have been politic to drop their distinctions, and be absorbed in the surrounding mass of nations;—though they often seemed to be on the point of losing their separate existence;—though they had the strongest temptations to coalesce with others;—though they gained nothing by their religion but suffering, and might have exchanged it for one that would have brought them honour and wealth;—though, at one period, they might easily, and with little sacrifice, have united with the Mahomedan power, and not only saved themselves from oppression, but gratified their revenge upon others;—though the absorption of the ten tribes shows that there was nothing in their natural character to prevent them mingling with others, and being lost among them; yet, in spite of all these things, the Jews have preserved their separation, and gloried in it as a distinction, rather than been ashamed of it, as a disgrace. Scattered, yet preserved, they have, in this respect, stood quite alone through the lapse of centuries. There is no similar case amid Assyrians, or Greeks, or Romans, or Goths, or Europeans. There is no similar case in the history of the world; and there is no explaining what has happened on human or ordinary means.

And what is the state and character of the Jews now? With a few exceptions, too inconsiderable to be mentioned, they are suffering at present the same treatment to which they have been subjected for the last 1800 years. Still are they oppressed and persecuted in many countries; still are they despised and reproached in all. And how has this affected them? Has it softened, and purified, and refined their character? Has it convinced them of their sin? And have they, by experience, been driven to repentance and obedience, and to the acknowledgment of that truth which they have so long disowned? No. Persecution has often—I may say always—

improved and elevated the moral and religious character of Christians. The primitive church flourished through the blood of martyrs. But the persecution of the Jews has only served to rivet their prejudices, to degrade their character, and make them worse than before. Not suffering for truth; having no ennobling object before them; bearing the judgment of God, without his blessing,—their bitter experience has done them no good.

Intellectually considered, the Jews are miserably low, and can boast neither of literature nor science. They are grossly ignorant even of their own Scriptures; hardened in infidelity and the worst errors; most puerile and superstitious in their religious observances; notoriously enslaved to the world; addicted to many immoralities,—yet, withal, boasting of the proudest self-righteousness. Such has been, and such continues to be, the general character of the Jews. Having lost all reasonable hope of the world to come, they have abandoned themselves wholly to the pursuit of this; and it has moulded their character accordingly. But, with all this, though their history has been so perverse, and worldly, and rebellious; so hostile to the will of God; they have not frustrated him in his purposes. They have not lived, and sinned, and suffered, for no end. We might be apt to think so, and that God had been disappointed; but no. In every age, they have been his witnesses. They have, in their history, illustrated and proclaimed the providence of God. They have all along declared, and continue to declare, his unity. They prepared the way for the coming of the Son of God, and contributed essentially to the evidence of that event. They were the depositaries, the guardians, the authenticators of the Old Testament Scriptures. They proved and proclaimed the shocking depravity of human nature, and the method of salvation through an atonement. They are the type of God's people in every age. In their rejection, they have been the means of exhibiting God's insufferable hatred to sin, and his awful justice; and, in their restoration, they will be the means of proclaiming universally the faithfulness of God, his fidelity

to his promises, and the exuberance of his mercy; thus making a living, and visible, and most impressive demonstration of the most prominent perfections of the divine character.

But we are anticipating what more properly belongs to another part of the discourse. We have seen the past and the present state and character of the Jews; and now a very interesting question arises, What is to become of these men for the future? They are neither so inconsiderable in numbers, nor so commonplace in circumstances, that we should feel indifferent as to what the result may be. Are they to continue the same in the future that they have been in the past, and as they are at present? Are they to descend to the day of judgment, the same scattered, despised, oppressed, ungodly, rebellious, worldly, incorrigible people, that they have hitherto been? Is there to be no favourable change, either upon their temporal or spiritual condition? Are body and soul to perish without hope—one generation following another in misery and degradation? Doubtless, this is what the Jews, and all sinners, deserve. Their abuse of privilege is such, that no punishment is too severe for them; but is this what is destined for them? Can we only commiserate their irretrievable fall?

Supposing that the men of the world had the destiny of the Jews at their command, and could accomplish for them whatever they willed, what would they do? They would probably think it enough to lighten and improve their earthly condition; they would (if it did not seem unfavourable to the commerce of the world) seek to amalgamate them with other nations; perhaps they would even think it desirable that they should be collected together into one country, and speak one language. But, though something for their good might be accomplished in this way, Scripture contemplates much more. God has revealed it as his purpose, that the Jews shall be preserved as a distinct people; shall be restored to their own land; shall embrace the faith of the gospel; and shall be signally blessed and honoured, both as regards their temporal and spiritual estate. This is a very

delightful prospect; and how do we establish its reality?

There are various considerations which would lead us to anticipate this event; much which seems to prepare for it; and there are, besides, the distinct announcements of the word of God upon the subject. We have to remember, then, that the past history of the Jews has been very remarkable; more so than that of any other nation which has been. They have been remarkable in their origin; in the miraculous events which befell them; in their separation; in their preservation; and in their punishment. Every part of their history is wonderful. This would lead us to expect that their future history should be remarkable also. We generally find this to be the rule of Providence. There is a correspondence and consistency in God's dealings with any one subject. Now, the restoration and christianization of the Jews would be thus remarkable, and of a piece with his other dispensations towards them. It would not be so wonderful that they should continue to be punished as they are at present; that would be an ordinary case of moral retribution; but that they should be restored and converted in spite of so many obstacles in the way of both, how singular!—that they should be honoured in those respects in which they have been most dishonoured, how remarkable and how worthy of the other wonderful events of the Jewish history!

Again we have to remember, and it strengthens the foregoing consideration, that the Jews are *capable*, by the events supposed, of adding much to the illustration of God's glory. The grand design of all that has been created, and which is brought to pass, is to manifest the divine glory. By God's dispensations towards the Jews, that glory has been already strikingly illustrated. There is not an attribute which has not come in for a measure of praise; but the capacity of illustrating the divine perfections by the Jews is not exhausted by what has already taken place. It is easy to see that they are susceptible of bringing God a much larger revenue of glory than they have

yet brought him; and by no events, humanly speaking, would that glory be more beautifully displayed, than by their restoration to their own land, and to the faith and obedience of Christ. In accomplishing these events, there would be a mighty manifestation of power and wisdom, forbearance and compassion, not to speak of truth. The very length of time that the Jews have lain under the curse of God, and the severity of their punishment, and the mystery which overhangs their condition and prospects, would render their deliverance, and consequently the manifestation of divine glory, more illustrious when it came. The greater the previous darkness, the brighter and more grateful the coming light. Thus does there seem to be good reason, so far as God himself is concerned, why he should interpose in behalf of Israel.

Think, again, how much God has already done for them. With God, and, indeed, with wise men also, the past is a pledge of the future; and how large is the honour and the goodness of which he has made the Jews partakers in former times! How did he single them out from the nations, and dignify their ancestors with the name of his friends, and make special revelations to them, and work special miracles for them; deliver them from Egypt; put them in possession of Canaan; uphold a succession of prophets among them; send his own Son, and, as to his human nature, make him one of their nation and number! And can it be believed that, after all this, God will stop short, and do no more for the Jews? Will he allow them to live and die in their wretchedness and alienation? Will he treat them now as if he never cared for them before? When all the Gentile world is to be christianized, are the Jews alone to remain unbelievers? When all is moving forward to a happy change, are they alone to stand still; are they to be an exception of wo amid universal rejoicing? To say the least, it would be very strange, considering God's revealed character, were he to allow the Jews to remain for ever in their present condition. It would be against all analogy; it would

be leaving his work incomplete. In God's works there is generally a large measure of compensation. This applies to grace as well as to providence. The Gentiles, after being long excluded, have been admitted to the privileges of the Christian church. The western quarters of the world, after having long been enveloped in spiritual darkness, have been enlightened with the gospel; while the east, once highly favoured, has been abandoned to darkness; and so of many similar cases. Now, the Jews have been so long alienated from the church of God, that, on the principle of providential compensation, we might expect them to be ultimately brought in. Their suffering has been no common suffering, either in severity or duration. It has been wonderful in both respects. They are not like poor neglected slaves, who never knew any better treatment. They were once very differently regarded and honoured; the most favoured of God's children. And surely, then, we would expect that they were not to continue always what they are; that, in the future, some balance, some compensation, awaits them for their present depression; nay, that the compensation will be glorious and large, as the depression has been deep and protracted.

Then we must remember that the actual circumstances of the Jews at present betoken a propitious change. Dark and hopeless as their case seems to be, there are circumstances in their feelings and condition, which intimate that at least their temporal state shall be improved; that they shall be restored to their own land. The Jews themselves expect that one day they shall be restored; and this expectation is not the vague idea of a few individuals, got up as a refuge from present pain; it is the prevailing idea of the Jewish nation in every age, and it is persevered in, in spite of the hardest experience which should damp and destroy it. So strong is the impression, that many Jews, when dying, make provision that their bodies, and those of their friends, shall be buried in the land of their fathers; and some repair thither in the decline of life, that they may lay their

bones within the borders of Canaan, in the full expectation that one day that land is to be inhabited by, and to form the sepulchre of, their children.

Then we have to consider that the Jews are visibly separated from all other nations. This was predicted of them, and it has been strikingly realized. However mixed up with others, they have always been a distinct people; even more so now than when they dwelt apart in their own land. It is of no moment to inquire how this has been brought about; whether by the nature of their religious institutions, or by the peculiar interposition of God. The fact is certain; it is also a continued fact. The Jew is not reckoned, nor does he possess full political privileges in the countries in which he sojourns. He is treated as a stranger in all. Often he lives in a separate district in large towns—a district appropriated to Jews. In character and habits, and even outward appearance, he is readily distinguished; associating and intermarrying only with his own nation. Now, what is the object and use of this remarkable separation? There must be some design in it. Possibly to make the punishment fall more heavily upon the sin of the Jews; but this will not explain the whole. It will not explain the continued distinction, now that the punishment is becoming less severe. There seems to be no way of explaining it, but by believing that some great and wonderful event awaits them in the future; and what can that be but their restoration and conversion? It cannot be their amalgamation with other nations; for this would not be very wonderful. It would not be worthy of so singular and protracted a separation; and, besides, were this what was contemplated, we would expect that there should be some approach to amalgamation now. On the other hand, if the Jews are to be restored to their own land, there must be a separation, and that continued from age to age; otherwise they could not be known to be Jews, when they return. And for the same reason, if they are to be converted, and so made the instruments of spiritual good to others, a separation is desirable, nay, necessary,

because it will make their conversion the more striking and proclaimed, and so the more useful.

These things all point to the restoration of the Jews; and then they are heightened in force when we consider, that in their pursuits and mode of life, the Jews are eminently a moveable people. They are the most moveable people on the face of the world. They count no country their home. It is their business to travel from country to country. They are not tied down to fixed pursuits; such as those of agriculture, which cannot be readily parted with. Even in Poland, where they are most numerous and stationary, they are chiefly engaged in trade and commerce, and cannot be prevailed upon to engage in any thing else. As a whole, they are most remarkable as dealers and exchangers in money. Their property is convertible in the easiest manner. They are, so to speak, upon the wing; they could change their abode at a moment's warning.

And if, from the Jews themselves, we turn to the land of their fathers, we find it in a condition, above all others, most apt and likely to change masters. It is very partially inhabited: inhabited, where there are a people, only by the wandering Arab, almost as migratory as the Jew. The government is fast hastening to dissolution. It is the interest, humanly speaking, of no great or powerful nation to hinder the establishment of the Jews in Palestine. It is rather for their advantage to promote it. The Jews are sufficiently able to purchase the land with money, were this the stipulation. There is no country which has more the appearance of waiting for an inhabitant; no country which it would be easier to appropriate: and perhaps there is no period at which these aspects of it are more striking than at the present. So much for the presumption of reason and fact. They are pretty strong. They are sufficient to give force and courage to many schemes of human enterprise; but, however plausible, they are not sufficient on which to rest religious faith and practice.

We must now betake ourselves to the

*Scriptures*, and see what they declare upon the subject under consideration; and, on entering this field, the first thing which strikes one is, that there is no passage of Scripture which declares the final rejection and abandonment of the Jewish nation. Amid all the severity of the language which is applied to the Jews—and that is not small—there is no pronouncing their case hopeless. There is always, whatever the interpretation may be which we put upon the language, some softening, and qualification, and intimation of a change. Now, supposing it to be an established part of the plan of Heaven, that the Jews, as a people, were finally to perish in unbelief, is it possible to imagine that, among the many threatenings and curses, there would have been no distinct announcement to this effect? Assuredly not. But we have much stronger evidence than this; which, at the best, is but negative. The *Scriptures*, both of the Old and New Testaments, overflow with allusions, and prophecies, and declarations respecting the future restoration of the Jews. There is scarcely an Old Testament prophet who is not full upon the subject; and the ten tribes, as well as the two, are represented as being destined to be restored, though the event, to human apprehension, would seem much more arduous and unlikely.

The Scripture revelation on this subject is so enlarged, that it is impossible to do more than select a very few passages; and the same remarks which apply to them will be found to apply to many others. One of the first things which arrests our attention in perusing the *Scriptures* with a view to this question, is the multitude of passages where the land of Canaan is promised and given to Abraham and his posterity for ever, and for an everlasting inheritance, and for an everlasting possession. Now, it is well known that the two tribes did not actually inhabit Canaan more than fifteen hundred years, and the ten tribes not more than half that period. Unless, then, it be intended that both should inhabit the land for some lengthened period in the future, the promise and declaration of God have failed: and who can for a moment credit this? It is no

answer to say, that such language is figurative. There is no intimation, where the passages occur, that this is the case. The assumption is gratuitous; nay, the language to which we refer occurs in plain passages, which give no countenance to figure; where figure seems to be out of place. At least, this remark applies to many of them.

Then there are a multitude of passages which distinctly declare that the Jews shall be restored to their own land. Take, for instance, the promises of God by Moses in the 26th of Leviticus; where, after declaring in the strongest manner the dispersion of the Jews by the Romans, it is added, "that, if they confess their iniquity, and turn to the Lord, then will I remember my covenant with Jacob; and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham, I will remember, and I will remember the land;" evidently alluding to the promise of the land of Canaan given to the patriarchs: and, in the same chapter, it is declared, "And for all that, notwithstanding all their sins, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away; neither will I allow them to destroy them utterly, and to break them utterly, and to break my covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God." This is introduced subsequent to the destruction of the Jewish nation by the Romans, and must be regarded as pointing to a happy change, both in their temporal and spiritual condition.

So again, in the 30th of Deuteronomy, it is declared to the Jews, "When all these things have come upon thee, the blessing and the curse which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call to mind, among all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return to the Lord thy God, and obey his voice with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion on thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee, and will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee

above thy fathers." Here both a spiritual conversion and a temporal restoration are most distinctly marked: and neither were accomplished by the restoration from Babylon; for this embraced, comparatively, but a small number; nor did these possess the whole land; far less were they all turned in heart to the Lord. It is impossible to understand this, and many other passages, figuratively; a figurative restoration to a particular country seems almost unintelligible.

Passing from Moses to Isaiah, what a clear and striking passage is that contained in our text. There is no doubt that the people here spoken of are the Jewish people, for they are expressly distinguished from the Gentiles in the prophecy; and it is not less clear that the period spoken of is the period of Messiah, for the chapter contains one of the most illustrious predictions of the coming of Messiah; and the deliverance from Babylon cannot, with any propriety, be denominated by God setting his hand the second time to recover his people; and many names are given of the countries where they are scattered, which is much more descriptive of the second captivity than of the first. Indeed, no language could be more clearly descriptive of a national restoration to their own land. It seems expressly intended to exclude every other interpretation. It will not do to say that their conversion to the faith of Christ is all that is intended: that doctrine is clearly taught in other passages, and it may be in the last clause of our text, in this passage; but this is manifestly not the great doctrine. Spiritual conversion is not confined to one place, which is the idea attributed to restoration in the passage; it is common to all countries and climates. And in the 33d of Jeremiah, God expressly speaking of his people, says, "Behold, I will bring health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth; and I will cause the captivity of Judah, and the captivity of Israel to return; (here even the ten tribes are spoken of;) and I will build them as at first." And then, in the same chapter, speaking of the days of the Branch of

righteousness, it is declared, "In those days shall Judah be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely;" thus marking, when we combine the verses, the national restoration and spiritual conversion of the Jewish people.

There is no passage, however, more striking upon this subject than the vision of Ezekiel, contained in the 37th chapter of his prophecy—the vision of the resurrection of dry bones. We ought to read the whole of the chapter; but I am afraid that your time will not suffice. Though it is not at all improbable that the restoration here spoken of primarily referred to the restoration from Babylon—as in many of the works of God there is a beautiful analogy, so that one is the earnest and the picture of another—yet, with all this, it is abundantly clear that nothing less than the ultimate restoration and conversion of all the tribes is contemplated. We are expressly told, that the whole house of Israel is intended to be described by the vision; and the terms of the prophecy will not suit a more restricted application; for the return of the Jews from Babylon was comparatively small; and those who returned were not all converted in soul, and their prince could not be said to reign over them for ever; and the opposite of these things is contemplated in the vision.

And then the imagery employed is most admirably descriptive of the state and character of the Jews. Once they had been alive to God; but now they were dead: they were bones, and dry bones; not only without the life of religion, but hostile and averse to it. They were scattered bones; no longer a nation, but limb separated from limb; scattered about like bones in a churchyard, or on a field of battle. So opposed are the Jews to a spiritual change; so unlikely are they to become the subject of it, that it is asked, Can these bones live?—intimating, that it is exceedingly improbable: and, to mere human apprehension, what could be more so? But they are to live; the breath of the Lord is to breathe upon them, and they are to become living souls.

So we might refer you to the prophecy of Hosea, in the 3d chapter, that the

children of Israel were to abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without sacrifice; which has been most strikingly verified for eighteen hundred years; and not only so, but they were to be without image, or ephod, or teraphim; that, though surrounded with idolatrous nations, and strongly tempted to join in their worship, they should continue to maintain the unity of God, which has been not less strikingly realized; and that afterwards they should return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days. And if the first two parts of the prediction have been so truly established, shall the last part prove fallacious? We might refer you, also, to various passages in the minor prophets; but we are obliged to hasten to two celebrated passages in the New Testament. In the 21st of Luke, we are told, "That Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." This is said by way of comfort to the christianized Jews. Now, it is clear, from these words, that when the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, whatever these may be, Israel shall be no longer trodden down. No word could better express the degradation and desolation to which the Jewish cause is subjected; but, as truly as it has been trodden down, so truly shall it one day cease to be trodden down. The moment that the times of the Gentiles are completed, Israel shall arise. The one event shall be the signal for the other: and when shall this be? There may be diversity of judgment in the interpretation of the language of the passage; but, both from the words themselves, and from the reference which the passage bears to the prophecies of Daniel, there seems reason to conclude that the times of the Gentiles are the times of the Gentile apostacy—the twelve hundred and sixty years of Daniel and of John—on the expiry of which Jerusalem shall be rebuilt. However this may be, the fact is certain, that when the times of the Gentiles are completed, the Jews shall no longer be trodden down.

And these views are confirmed and enlarged by the announcement of the

apostle Paul, in the 11th of the Romans, who compares the Jews to the broken off branches of an olive tree, but at the same time declares, that one day they shall be grafted in; and who proceeds still farther in telling us that blindness, in part, has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; and so all Israel, according to the prophecy, shall be saved. From this it is clear, that the Jews are one day to be converted; and the period is assigned, "When the fulness of the Gentiles is come in;" which, agreeably to the original, may be interpreted to mean the same with the declaration of Luke, "When the days of the Gentile apostasy are fulfilled;" or, what is probably still better, when the fulness of the conversion of the Gentiles is come in, or is in the course of coming in. The blindness is to rest upon Israel only until the christianization of the Gentiles. Whatever may be the interpretation which is adopted, there can be no doubt that the Jews are not to remain forever in spiritual darkness; that one day their blindness is to be done away, and that they are universally to rejoice in the light of the gospel.

Having established the doctrine that the Jews, as a nation, shall one day be restored to their own land, and converted to the faith of Christ, we must, before concluding, advert to one or two points which arise out of this doctrine, and which may be considered as subservient to the right knowledge of it. Though we cannot pretend to the same certainty respecting these, as respecting the doctrine itself, still they are highly important, and worthy of our consideration. Believing that the Jews are both to be restored and converted, it is an interesting point to inquire, What will be the *order* of these events? Which will come first? Of course we do not, nor would we, desire to speak strongly on this point; but, following the intimations of reason and Scripture, we would say that the restoration of the Jews to their own land will precede their conversion. If it be otherwise; if the conversion is to take place first, we, humanly speaking, postpone the restoration to a very great distance; to a much greater distance than

the aspect of events seems to warrant; and, more than this, we prevent the restoration of the Jews proving such an illustrious example of the power and faithfulness of God as it is fitted and intended to be. It would not be so wonderful that the Jews, in a converted state, should return to Palestine, as that they should return in the character of enemies, opposed to God, and opposed to the prophecy, yet still overruled in will to accomplish God's designs; and when we think that the whole intention of God's dealings with the Jews is to manifest the perfections of his character, the order supposed is the more probable. And then, in the vision of Ezekiel, before life is communicated to the dry bones, there are various preparatory movements of considerable importance described as taking place. There is a shaking and uniting of bone with bone, and a coming up of flesh and sinews, and a covering with skin, all before any breath is imparted; which would well describe a national restoration in an unconverted state. And the same idea seems to be conveyed in the 12th of Zechariah, where Jerusalem is said to be inhabited in her own place even in Jerusalem, and to be the object of God's providence and protection against enemies, before the Spirit of grace and supplication, making the inhabitants new creatures, is represented as descending. But, though the national restoration should precede the general conversion of the Jews, that is no reason to relax our diligence about the latter; for our great duty of labour remains the same, whatever may be God's purposes; and, though the nation may not be converted, there is no reason to believe that many individuals may not be converted ere the restoration takes place.

Another interesting point, connected with the subject which we have been considering, is the *time* when the restoration and conversion of the Jews is to be accomplished. The order is interesting; still more so is the time: but here also we must confess our ignorance, and speak with diffidence. There is reason to believe that the time is *near*. The amount of interest and labour which has been

called forth among Christians, during the last twenty years, in behalf of the Jews, is unprecedented in their history. More has been done, and is doing, than has been attempted since the days of the apostles. Within these few years, the gospel has been preached at Jerusalem, where it has not been preached for centuries. If the Jews are destined to return to their own land as Jews, and not as Christians, there seems to be a necessity that they should return soon; as, from the operation of various causes, the softenings and the changes which are taking place among them, there would be danger, if long persisted in, of their losing their distinctive character, and being assimilated to surrounding nations; in which case, neither their restoration nor conversion would be so visible, nor the fulfilment of the prophecy so conspicuous.

Then there seems reason to believe that the restoration of the Jews is intimately connected in Scripture with the fall of Antichrist, and shall immediately follow it. Popery has, through her idolatries and corruptions of Christianity, and savage persecutions of the Jews, been, in all ages, one of the most formidable obstacles to the conversion or restoration of the Jewish people. She has been their worst enemy, both for body and soul. Now, as we know that her days are numbered; that the one thousand two hundred and sixty years of her darkness must be drawing to a close; so we may expect that, in the same proportion, the restoration of the Jews is near. The fall of popery will not only remove a great obstacle out of their way; it will supply the Jews with the most striking proof of the divine truth of Christianity. It will show them the admirable connexion between the prophecy and the fulfilment; between the threatening and the punishment. And it will, at the same time, be the means of showing them what true Christianity is, separated from every error.

These views accord with the distinct intimations of prophecy. Jerusalem is to be trodden down until the times of the Gentile apostacy are fulfilled, and no longer. In the book of Revelation, the song of joy and triumph which is sung

over the destruction of Babylon, or the antichristian church, is a Hebrew doxology, sung by Jews. The doxology is nowhere else found, and the Jews are specially distinguished from the twenty-four elders and four living creatures, the representatives of the converted Gentile church. The scene is laid in heaven; and the chorus of the song, Hallelujah, is in the Hebrew tongue. An examination of the prophecy leaves little doubt that the great rejoicing company are Jews, and that the Hebrew doxology has been employed to mark their restoration to the church of Christ. It may be added, that the prophecy has never yet received its full accomplishment; in which the representatives of various nations are described as taking hold of the skirt of a Jew, and saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you; and this intimates that the Jews are to bear a part in the instruction and conversion of the Gentiles; consequently, their own restoration must precede this; and, as the conversion of the world is represented as being contemporaneous with, and immediately subsequent to, the overthrow of Antichrist, so the evidence is the stronger that the restoration and conversion of the Jews is at hand; at least is not afar off, or at a discouraging distance.

The next point which merits our notice—and we can speak of it with greater certainty than the others, though necessarily in a very hurried manner—is the great advantage, the *blessed consequences*, which will flow from the restoration and conversion of the Jews. These consequences are far more glorious than we can conceive, or than have ever been realized in the history of the church of Christ. Never has the time been when Jew and Gentile were members of the Redeemer's church at the same moment; or, at best, it did not exceed thirty years. Hitherto there has been division, but then there shall be union.

To the Jews themselves, the change will be a great and a happy one. It will be a termination to their dispersions and their wanderings; their reproach, and sufferings, and persecutions. It will be an end to their ignorance and prejudices;

their irreligion and infidelity; their worldliness, their immorality, and hatred to Christ and to Christians. It will be a fulfilment of the earliest and most delightful prophecies. It will be the season of pardon and holiness, and spiritual worship, and spiritual illumination. It will be the season of gratitude, and strength, and vigour, and hope; all in their warmest and brightest forms. It will be the season of heavenly affections and ancient espousals; the joy of the long-lost prodigal restored; a reversion to the blessedness of Canaan; a brief preparatory foretaste of the blessedness of heaven. The change shall be glorious, to compensate for past dishonour. According to the depth of the degradation, so shall be the largeness of the mercy and the joy. The Jews shall not only be happy and blessed in their restoration and conversion; they shall walk first among the christianized nations of the earth; they shall be looked upon as the elder born; they shall be restored to the pre-eminence which they enjoyed before, and none shall be offended. All shall rejoice in their exaltation: "And thou, O tower of the flock! the stronghold of the daughter of Zion! unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion, the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem."

Nor shall the restoration and conversion of Israel be of advantage only to themselves; it shall be of the utmost advantage to the Gentile nations; to the world at large. In every age, the Jews have been of use to others; they have been their pioneers and instructors: nations have been benefited just as they have held intercourse with them. What they have been in the past, they are destined to be in the future. There are many ways in which we would expect them to be of use to others: their restoration to their own land, and conversion to the faith of Christ, will be a most illustrious proof of the divinity of the Gospel. It will spread abroad universally the evidence of its truth; it will strike Mahometans, and heathens, and nominal Christians, with astonishment; it will silence every objection, and put to shame all the scorn of infidelity. And then we may expect that

the Jews will become the most admirable missionaries of Christianity. They were so in primitive times, and there is no reason why they should not be so again. Their very character as wanderers; the hardships and oppressions which they have endured; a sense of the amazing mercy which has been vouchsafed to them, will all, with God's blessing, form them into the noblest missionaries; will raise up a nation of St. Pauls. In the mean time, the Gentiles, already christianized, will, from God's dealings towards the Jews, be led to stronger faith, and warmer love, and more adoring gratitude; to brighter hope, and redoubled prayers, and a more devoted obedience. And this state of things will come in admirable time to strengthen the zeal of the Jews. A holy rivalry, in the good work of diffusing the knowledge of the gospel, will be provoked between the two parties, and kept up; they will stir each other up to jealousy, like runners in a race; and the glory of the millennial days will be hastened.

Nor are these mere expectations or speculations, however natural and probable: they are borne out by the views of Scripture. Various are the passages which intimate, in no doubtful language, that the conversion of the Jews holds an important connexion with the conversion of the Gentiles, and that they are to bear a part in carrying it forward; that until the Jews are christianized, there is to be comparatively little spiritual conversion among the Gentiles. The most striking passage to this effect, is the celebrated one in the 11th of the Romans: "Now, if the fall of the Jews be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness? for if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the reconciling of them be, but life from the dead?"

From this we learn, that the rejection of the Jews was the occasion of the calling of the Gentiles to the church of Christ; and if, argues the apostle, the rejection of them be accompanied with so much good, how much greater will be the good which will attend the conversion

of the Jews? The reasoning is beautiful and strong. The apostle does not tell us how great the spiritual advantage to the Gentiles will prove. He asks how much more; implying that he cannot declare it aright; that it is too vast to be estimated; and so he concludes by telling us, that the change itself, and the joy which it will awaken in the world, will be like that which would be produced by one being raised from the dead. We can conceive no change to be greater, or more joyful than this. What joy would be called forth, were a dead city, a dead nation, to arise to life? What would be the feelings of spectators and relations? And what, then, will be the joy called forth over the resurrection of a world of dead souls? To enable us to enter in the least degree into the noble views of the apostle, we must bear in mind what is the good which has accrued to the Gentile world from the rejection of the Jews. We must remember all the thousand indescribable blessings, direct and indirect, which have flowed forth upon the world from Christianity, for the last eighteen hundred years; the countries which it has civilized, the souls which it has saved; and then remember that all this is but the fruit of the fall of the Jews, and from it endeavour to estimate, What must be the fruit of the fulness of the Gentiles?—how immense and inconceivable!

There is yet another advantage which will attend the restoration and conversion of the Jews, it will promote the glory of God, and that in a most wonderful manner. This is so evident, from what has just been said, that it needs no farther illustration. Just think what an illustration of power, and providence, and fidelity, and goodness, there will be, in safely gathering together and establishing the Jews in their own land, in spite of all difficulties and opposition in the way! What an illustration of the truth of Christianity; the faithfulness of God's providence; his patience and forbearance in his treatment of sinners! What an illustration of his condescension, and mercy, and omnipotence, in the conversion of the hardened and unbelieving Jews! What a proof of the virtue of the Saviour's

blood; the efficacy of his intercession; of the power and compassion of the Sanctifier! What an illustration of the mystery of God's providence and sovereignty; saving the worst; making the longest continued rebellion a step to the highest honours; converting the most aged and incorrigible apostates into the very instruments of christianizing others; and decking the crown, which they would fain trample in the dust, in new and unheard-of splendours. By no supposable history of men, or nations, could God manifest more of his glory, or to greater advantage. The last important point which we have to consider, is *the means* by which the restoration and conversion of the Jews are to be accomplished. We have seen the order, and the time, and the blessed consequences, and now we are anxious to know the means. The very interest of the former points makes us the more anxious about this. It is a point which peculiarly concerns and comes home to ourselves; and happily we can speak with considerable certainty regarding it; with more certainty than, in the present state of our knowledge, we can speak of many other points. It is not improbable that, in carrying into effect the restoration and conversion of the Jews, God may see meet to employ supernatural agency. The case of the Jews is so very peculiar, and so many of the great events in their history have been indebted to special interpositions; such as the deliverance from Egypt, the entrance into Canaan; the deliverance from Babylon, and destruction of Jerusalem, that we would not wonder that this should be the case in the future. The shaking among the dry bones, preparatory to the imparting of spiritual life in the valley of vision, may intimate as much; and perhaps this may explain various Scripture hints as to the future history of the Jews, which otherwise it would not be easy to explain. Supernatural agency, too, will solve many of the difficulties which at first sight may be started, and which are started against the literal restoration to, and abode of the Jews in their own land. But, while all this is admitted, we must not forget—for it is an important truth—that the restora-

tion and conversion of Israel is to be brought about, under God, chiefly by human instrumentality.

This is what might, so far, have been anticipated, and what is confirmed by the express announcement of Scripture. Even where God most visibly interposed in ancient times in behalf of the Jews, he always made use of human agency. The deliverance from Egypt was miraculous; but still, through the medium of Moses, human agency was employed, so far as it could extend; and what has been in the past we may believe will be in the future. It would not be safe or desirable that man should be released from his duty to man; and so even where God works most conspicuously, it is our duty to work also. There is no room, apart from sin, for remissness and inactivity in the Jewish cause.

But there is more than this. Scripture clearly teaches, that human agency is to be the greatest instrument in the conversion of the Jews. The prophet Jeremiah is commanded by God to go to the north, where the ten tribes lay scattered, and to proclaim to them these words: "Return, thou backsliding Israel, and I will not cause my anger to fall upon you," and so forth. And in doing this, what was he required to do, but to act the part of a missionary? And in the vision of Ezekiel, the prophet is commanded to pray to the Spirit of God under the emblem of breath, or wind: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live!" It was in obeying this command, in the exercise of prayer, that the bones arose and lived. And what was this but prayer for the outpouring of the Spirit? The apostle Paul, again, in his second epistle to the Corinthians, declares that there is a thick veil hung over the minds of his unbelieving countrymen, when they read Moses and the law; which veil, he assures us, shall be taken away. And what does this imply, but that the word of God, through the teaching of the Spirit, is to be a great means of their conversion, and therefore must be carefully circulated amongst them? And, lastly, the same apostle, in the 11th of the Romans, informs us that the Jews at pre-

sent remain in a state of unbelief; that, through your mercy, that is, the mercy of the Gentiles, they also may obtain mercy. And what is the meaning of this? What is the meaning of the mercy of the Gentiles, but the money and the resources which, out of a principle of holy compassion, the Gentiles put into operation for the spiritual welfare of the Jews? Thus do the Scriptures point to missionary labour, and prayer for the Spirit, and the circulation of the word of God, and pecuniary contributions, as forming the chief part of the agency which is to be employed for the conversion of Israel. And what are these but the means which faithful men have employed, and are employing, in this great and good cause at the present day?

But I must now very shortly advert to the society, whose claims have brought us together this evening. The object of that society, you all know, is to promote Christianity among the Jews. And after what has been said as to the means by which this is to be accomplished, namely, by the instrumentality of men, under the blessing of God, it is not necessary for me to detain you with any lengthened observations. One would think that so clear a case would preclude the need of any observations at all; but the truth is, that there is a very great amount of misapprehension and error, and consequently indifference, entertained upon the Jewish cause, especially in Scotland; and, from the smallness of the subscriptions in Glasgow, I fear that this great city cannot be exempted from the charge of languor too.

The reasons of this are manifold. The comparatively small number of Jews; their peculiar position, standing out from all other men, and so disturbing the flow of natural sympathy; the worldliness, and wickedness, and obstinacy of their character; the strong prejudice and suspicion of insincerity which attach to their profession of Christianity; the small comparative amount of what has been accomplished for them; the frequent disappointment and failure of the Jewish converts; the diversity of the interpretation which has been given to the proph-

cies belonging to the Jews, and the little study which is given to them at all; the apparently hopeless loss of the ten tribes; mistaken notions of what are the Divine purposes respecting Israel, and the dread of interfering with these purposes; the difficulty of seeing how the Jews can be collected from all countries, and restored to their own land.

These and similar considerations have all tended to create an indifference and insensibility to the spiritual interests of the Jews. It were not difficult to answer them separately, and to show how unwarrantable is the feeling and the conduct which they have called forth; but we shall rather, by way of balance, remind you of many considerations on the other side, which, in addition to those motives which should always influence us in christianizing the soul, whether that soul belong to a Jew or a Gentile, should peculiarly interest us in the christianization of the children of Israel.

We should consider that the Jews are God's ancient people; that in themselves they are considerable in numbers; that we owe a vast deal to them; that they have been the authors and guardians of the Scriptures, the depositaries of many of the great truths of revelation, the benefactors of the world; that they have suffered most severely, and for a very protracted period, and that we have borne our share in the infliction; that they are the objects of the deepest compassion, inasmuch as their character is so worldly, and deceitful, and degraded, and their future punishment must be so much the more severe; that they hold an important connexion, as instruments, with the salvation of the Gentiles, and that little can be expected in this field until they themselves are christianized; that Christ and his apostles were much interested in their salvation, previous to their declared apostacy, and that less cannot be expected after the apostacy has taken place, and been so long persisted in; that we enjoy peculiar advantages in reasoning with the Jews on the subject of Christianity, inasmuch as they acknowledge the divine authority of the Old Testament Scriptures, and are pretty easily accessible through

the medium of our own language; that, in these latter days, no little has been done, and is doing for them; that there is a considerable change in the public feeling towards them, and that they are treated with much more kindness; that, on the other hand, they have met and encouraged the kind and Christian exertions which have been called forth in their behalf; that there have been, and are, as many pleasing symptoms of progress and success among them as in the circumstances might have been expected; that their conversion is clearly predicted, and shall certainly be accomplished; that it will prove peculiarly honouring and glorifying to God, when it comes; and that there is every reason to hope that it may be near, and that the present shakings and convulsions among the nations may be designed to hasten it.

We should consider, too, that, as we value self-interest, it becomes us to exert ourselves in behalf of the spiritual welfare of the Jews; that, as no people or nation have ever oppressed them without suffering for it, so there is reason to believe that those who comfort and christianize them shall be peculiarly honoured and blessed; and that it is specially befitting and most desirable that Great Britain, which, in point of religious privilege, may be regarded as the successor, in modern days, of the ancient Israel, should be eminently distinguished for her labours in this glorious field.

Let me, then, earnestly exhort you to lend your prayers and pecuniary contributions, and general interest and assistance to the Glasgow Society for promoting Christianity among the Jews. We do not ask without reason. The object contemplated is one of peculiar interest, and importance, and glory. It is not the mere restoration of the Jewish people to their own land. However patriotic that object might be, and however pleasing to the benevolent mind, we could not, amid the manifold and more pressing spiritual claims of mankind, urge this plea very strongly. It would be comparatively a small matter that the Jews went back to Canaan, and were established within its borders to-morrow, if their minds were to

remain in their present state of alienation from the faith and love of Christ. Poets and philanthropists might rejoice, but Christians would continue to mourn. Their national restoration, however, is not our chief object, nor is it so much within our province. Our great desire, and labour, and prayer, is to christianize their minds; to make them new creatures; to restore them to the favour and image of God, and carry them in triumph to the heavenly Canaan.

No object can be more noble than this: and, in the use of appointed means, it is within our reach, and will not retard the temporal restoration of Israel by an hour; and the channels of labour are already provided, and there are pleasing signs which strengthen and encourage us in the proper application of them. There is every thing to warm and excite; there is nothing to damp or discourage; and, though there were, there is enough, and more than enough, on the other side, to compensate for and master every discouragement.

Awake, then, to interest and zeal in the cause of Israel. Give your minds to the study of their case. Investigate the prophecies regarding them; investigate their present condition; cast away all indifference; pray, and labour, and contribute for their spiritual good. Treat them as fellow immortals; treat them as friends; treat them as benefactors; repay the benefits which they have conferred upon you and upon the church of Christ; approve yourselves the true children of Abraham, the true brethren of Paul—men of the same spirit with those whom you claim as your patterns and glory.

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#### OBSERVATIONS ON PSALMODY.

THE following remarks of Bishop Porteus, in a primary charge, delivered in the diocese of London in the year 1790, are partly applicable to various congregations, and are therefore recommended to the attention of all whom they concern.

“In country parishes, psalmody is generally engrossed by a select band, who sing a most wretched set of tunes in three or four parts, so complex, so difficult, and so

totally void of all true harmony, that it is impossible for the congregation to take a part with them; who, therefore, sit absorbed in silent admiration, or total inattention, without considering themselves as in any degree concerned in what is going forward. In London, it is generally a contest between the charity children and the organ, which shall be the loudest, and give most pain to the ear. By this means, the chief end and design of psalm singing is completely defeated; for, whatever may have been advanced to the contrary, it is most certain that parochial psalmody was originally intended to be a *part of divine worship*, an offering of praise, adoration, and thanksgiving to the Almighty; in which, of course, the whole congregation, as being all equally interested, were to take an equal share.

“Directions should be given to the organist not to drown and overpower the singers by the unremitted loudness and violent intonations of the full organ; but merely to conduct, and regulate, and sustain their voice, in a low and soft accompaniment on what is called the choir-organ. The congregation would then soon be tempted and enabled to join it.”

Among other advantages resulting from the improvements in psalmody, which he recommends to his clergy, the bishop adds:

“Whenever you had occasion to solicit the benevolence of your parishioners for your charity schools, you would have no need to call in the aid of any other musical performers; for there is no other kind of musical composition so well calculated to touch and affect the heart, and melt it into tenderness, kindness, and compassion, as well constructed and well regulated psalmody.

“I have no hesitation in saying that it would be highly improper to substitute choral and cathedral music in our parish churches, in the room of that plain, natural, soothing melody, of our best old psalm tunes; which speaks more forcibly to the hearts, and gives more warmth to the devotions of a Christian congregation than all the ingenious and learned contrivances of complex counterpoint.”

## SERMON V.

### MYSTERIES IN RELIGION.

BY THE REV. H. M'NEILE, A. M.

PERCY CHAPEL, FITZROY SQUARE.

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"Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour."—Isa. xlv. 15.

"BE still," saith the Lord of heaven and earth, "and know that I am the Lord." "I will be exalted among the heathen; I will be exalted in the earth." "O taste, and see," saith the Psalmist, inviting the people of God to the enjoyment of their privileges, "taste and see, that the Lord is good." And again: "To know thee," saith the Saviour, in his prayer to the Father, "is eternal life; to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Among all the objects by which the human understanding can be exercised, or the human affections engaged, the most important beyond comparison, and, with all who believe that there is a God beyond dispute, is God himself—God in the mysteriousness of his person and existence, God in the sovereignty of his creation and providence, God in the riches of his atoning love in Jesus Christ, God in the energy of his saving power by the Holy Ghost.

My dear Christian brethren, I gladly avail myself of this renewed opportunity of calling your attention in this place, to this the highest of all themes which can occupy the tongue or the attention of human beings. "Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour." Such was the exclamation of the prophet, when sinking under the weight of the revelation that had been given to him. Something of God was made known to him; but much remained unknown. A beam of light had fallen upon him, but it was only sufficient to make him intelligently conscious of the

unfathomable depth of the Fountain of Light itself. More light hath fallen upon us, and, with the New Testament in our hands, we might truly say, "Verily thou art a God that revealest thyself, O Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour." And yet, when that revelation is examined, and examined, if possible, with apostolical skill, we must exclaim, in unaffected apostolical humility, in ignorance, conscious and confessed, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! His ways are past finding out! Who hath known his mind? Who hath been his counsellor?" "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever and ever."

I am persuaded, my brethren, that one of the most important features in the subject which I desire now to bring before you, is *the indispensable necessity that exists for a mystery*. The indispensable necessity of a mystery: for the human mind is so constituted, that either it abuses the mystery into superstition, or it rejects the whole truth because of the mystery, and plunges, however unconsciously, into infidelity. To recognise, without abusing, a mystery, is the attitude to which a finite mind must be brought, in rightly receiving a revelation from the living God. For observe: suppose God to make a full and adequate revelation of himself; there is a point in the examination of that revelation, at which man's understanding must fail; for man's understanding, at the best, is finite; God is infinite. The finite cannot

grasp the infinite; and, therefore, there must needs be a point, at which the power of the finite understanding that can take in that infinite communication, would cease; and at a particular point, there would be an horizon to man's perceptions of truth. That is, to us there would be a point at which the revelation would cease to be explanation, and a man's view would be bounded, and a mystery would commence. For what is a mystery? A mystery is a revelation unexplained; a truth told, told distinctly, but not reasoned upon and explained; a truth so told that we can boldly say *what* it is, but not so explained as to enable us to say *how* it is. The personal existence of God, as declared in Holy Scripture, is a mystery; it is a revelation unexplained, a statement unreasoned; and it presents a horizon to the human understanding, which fades into mystery: and I wish to show you how unreasonable the man is who will reject the objects in the foreground, and in the centre of the landscape, because he cannot, with equal precision, discern the objects in the horizon.

God; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; one God; distinct, yet not divided; separate, yet still one. *The Son*; coequal and coeternal with the Father; yet begotten of the Father. *The Holy Spirit*; proceeding from the Father and the Son. The Son sent by the Father, and filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit received from the Father, and sent by the Son. The Father God; the Son God; the Holy Spirit God; and yet there is but one God. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one God." God saying *of* himself, "I am, and there is none else; I know not any." God saying *to* himself, "Let us make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness." What human understanding can grasp this? There is a revelation unexplained; the Trinity is an *imperfect discovery*, not a *contradiction*. There is a great difference between these two things. The intellect, to which nothing is mysterious, must be infinite: but a finite intellect can take cognizance of a contradiction. There may seem to be a contradiction in the

truth; but the cause is in the infirmity of the creature, and not in the infirmity of the truth itself. The subject matter of the proposition is too high; it is beyond our reach. We cannot demonstrate a contradiction, for we cannot enter into the matter of the statement. If such a statement were made concerning three *men* being one *man*, the subject matter of the proposition being within the boundaries of our cognizance, so that we can reason concerning it, one should be capable of proving the contradiction; but when such a statement is made of God, the subject matter of the proposition is beyond our reach: and though this statement may seem contradictory, the fault is here—in man's understanding, not in the truth.

Is not this the same in other things, as well as in religion? Do we understand *ourselves*, my brethren? The metaphysician inquires into the human mind; and the anatomist searches into the veins, and arteries, and joints of the human body; and they each make many discoveries: but there is a point at which they are both baffled—the union of mind and matter, and the power of the one over the other. It is a mysterious region, the fact of which cannot be denied, but the explanation of which cannot be given. They guess about it: and some, fastening upon the material structure, deny mind altogether, and would confine the man to organized matter. What I wish to show is, that in the science which connects itself with the existence of a man, there is a region of mystery; there is a fact: and in philosophy, facts hold the place which revelation holds in religion. This Book contains our facts. Experience gives the philosopher his facts; and facts bring him to a point where he must confess mystery. Where is the metaphysician that hath ever explained the action of mind upon matter, and the ready movements of flesh and bone, at the secret bidding of the mysterious visitant within? And where is the anatomist who hath discovered its origin, with his searching knife? No; there is a mystery in it. Now, where would be the philosophy, where would be the

reason of the man, who would deny the proximate facts which are discovered by the anatomist, and the proximate statements which are made, truly, by the metaphysician, because, if you press them both a tittle further, you come to a mystery? Would there be reason, would there be philosophy, in rejecting both of these branches of human learning, because they bring you, when legitimately pursued, into a region where you must confess yourself a little child, and receive the fact unexplained? For a mystery in philosophy is a fact unexplained; as a mystery in religion is a revelation unexplained.

Take another instance. Much has been discovered, and much has been demonstrated, in the science of astronomy. The motions of the heavenly bodies have been made matter of calculation amongst men; and true calculation; the results proving themselves true, by periodical returns of infallible observation. But there is a point at which we reach a mystery here. Upon what do all those calculations depend; upon what do all these motions rest? Upon a quality, which Sir Isaac Newton baptized; he gave the mystery a name; he called it "gravitation." Grant gravitation, and we can reason about the solar system. But what is gravitation? Who can explain that? Why should matter have gravity? It has. Yes; we know it has; that is a fact: but why should it? There is here a mystery. Why should the tendency of matter be to the centre of the earth? Why is it a fact, that if you could bore through the centre of the earth, if you had a hollow diameter through the earth, and dropped a ball through it, it would vibrate at the centre, and having fallen down, it would fall up again, back to the centre, and would never, and could never fall through? No one can tell why it is. Here is a mystery: grant this, which is in the horizon, and you prove your nearer object. But this must be granted as the mystery in the matter. And where would be the reason, I ask, where the philosophy, where the sound sense, where would be the supreme discernment of the men, who, because they cannot reason through,

and explain gravitation, would take upon them to reject the Newtonian system of philosophy in the heavens?

Now let us return to our sublimer theme. Here is a mystery concerning the existence of God; he is a "God that hideth himself;" he has given some information, but he has maintained a reserve, and there is a darkness. Suppose that the Trinity of persons in the Godhead were made plain to us; it would only be by the revelation of some farther-off point in the truth, which would throw forward the Trinity into the landscape, and enable us to look through it; and then the point so revealed would occupy the place of the horizon, and we would have transferred the mystery from one part of truth to another; and we would still have a mystery; for we are finite, and God is infinite. Now, where is the sense, the reason, the philosophy, the superior discernment—where is the more reasonable religion, of rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity, because there is a mystery in it, and rejecting the proximate statements of redemption, which all hang upon the Trinity, because, that when pressed home, they involve the human mind in a mystery, and make man feel, what he ought to feel—that he is a little ignorant child, at his highest attainments, in the presence of his Maker? No; this boasted reason is pride. This rational religion is the refusal of the mystery. It looks very like a determination to be what the devil said man should be, "as God," instead of being as a little child. And, verily, I say to you, dear brethren, except a man receive God's truth as a little child, willing to understand what his Father explains, he shall not enter into the kingdom of God.

My object in this much, has been to reconcile you to the existence of a mystery as regards the Godhead; revealed, but not explained, in the Bible. The Trinity is in the horizon, the Trinity in Unity; it is the horizon of revelation to us upon this point; it is the gravitation. Granting it, the whole statements of redemption are capable of demonstration: rejecting it, the whole scheme of redemption is a nonentity; for there is no Mediator, there is no atonement, there is no

Sanctifier. Reject the Trinity, and the gap which sin has made between God and man finds no one that can fill it up. All false glosses upon Christianity leave this gap unfilled up. Admit the mystery; and by the assistance of it, and resting upon it, we are in possession of the fundamental element of truth; which invests with infinite importance, and with demonstrative clearness, the mediation, the atonement, the recovery of the fallen creature back into the very bosom of God, which is salvation.

“Verily God hideth himself;” not as regards his personal existence only, but as regards THE SOVEREIGNTY OF ALL HIS WORKS IN CREATION AND PROVIDENCE, “Of him, and through him, and to him are all things.” He is the origin, he is the support, he is the end of all creation: no creature can come into existence at any time, can continue in existence for a moment, or can perform one single act, mental or bodily, but in conformity to, in compliance with, and in subserviency to, the eternal will of the living God. Angels, principalities, and powers in heaven—angels, principalities, and powers fallen to hell—all the visible creation of suns and planets, with their satellites innumerable, their atmospheres around them, and their millions of multitudinous beings upon them, all at every moment of existence hang upon the absolute will of God, for life, for breath, for motion, for all things. He spake the word, “Let them be,” and the solitude of eternity was peopled with the wonders of creation: and were he to speak the word “Let them cease to be,” annihilation would be instantaneous and universal, and God would be left again alone in the solitude of eternity. This is a glorious lesson for us to learn, my friends, that we may know our place, and that we may know something of our God; a God that hideth himself, indeed, but a God that revealeth himself in part.

Holiness, as well as power, is inseparable from our God; for as he has the power to do what he will without control, he has also the right to do what he will without injustice. There is nothing in the history of the fallen angels, which

can excite the smallest hesitation about ascribing still unto God in glory, holiness, unsullied holiness. The elect angels see and know this; they perceive that their original numbers are thinned, that thousands who at one time joined with them in singing the praises of their God have been cast down into darkness and ruin. They know full well, that neither Satan, nor any of his company, possessed a single power but what God gave them; or were tempted by a single opportunity but what God made for them: and yet instead of reasoning upon that fact, as *we* are sometimes tempted to reason, and thereupon calling in question the holiness of their Maker, we know that the language of the elect angels before the throne, with that history before their eyes, and the torments of their former companions clear in their intelligence—that their language is, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts.” Here is a mystery; we have intelligence enough to grapple with this mystery in its difficult parts, but we have not information enough to overcome this difficulty. Here again we are brought into a horizon. Where now is the sense, the reason—where is the superior discernment, and the greater exercise of soundness of discretion and judgment, in rejecting the sovereignty of God, in the absolute doing of all things, because that in following it out we are involved in a mystery as regards his moral government? If a man is to say, “If God do all these things absolutely, who hath resisted his will? who can resist his will? why, or how, can he then find fault?”—the language of the Scripture is, in reply, an appeal to our ignorance; it is not a further explanation of the mystery, but it is a very significant instruction to us, that the apparent difficulty lies on us, and not on him; for the answer is, “Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God?” And the illustration is, “Hath not the potter power over the same clay, to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?” Is there any explanation in that? Nay, brethren; it reasserts the very depth of the mystery, and leaves it unexplained. It is a revelation unexplained: nothing

can be more clearly stated; yet there is no explanation of it whatever.

There is, then, moral government with our God who hideth himself, at the same time that there is absolute sovereignty: and the principles of his moral government are the principles of equity, and righteousness, and truth. "God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death." This is the pedigree of damnation: man's lust—unto sin—unto death. But if a man shall reason thereupon, and say, "Well, if it be so, that man's sin is his own, and the evil he does originates in himself; then, by parity of reasoning, the good that he does must originate in himself also." Harken to the next words of the apostle; "Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Here again the mystery is repeated: sin is ascribed to the sinner's own act and deed, according to his own free-will; and all that is good is ascribed to the sovereign grace of God. Verily God hideth himself whilst he revealeth himself. Mercy and truth go before his face, as a Saviour; justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne.

Now, dear brethren, observe how one class of persons, in order to get rid of this mystery, as they vainly think, magnify human free-will into the turning point of power in this great subject, so as to make the omnipotent God pause in his designs for super-omnipotent man. And mark how another party, to get rid of the mystery, as they vainly think, on the other side, deny the human free-agency, and make man a piece of matter, as a machine. Neither of these two things, when pressed so as to infringe upon the other, can be true; yet the truth lies in the admission of both these statements, as a revelation from God unexplained. It is a mystery. We may indeed say more upon this point. Here

God hath revealed himself; not unto the clearing up of the difficulty, but unto the intelligent view of it; so far that we have become intelligently ignorant. Is that a contradiction in terms? "*Intelligently ignorant.*" No man will say so, but the man who is so ignorant as not to be conscious of his own ignorance. The wise man will acknowledge, that the height of his wisdom consists in having become intelligently ignorant. It is of the nature of an intelligent creature to decide upon the evidence before it; and to decide freely upon that evidence, and it is in the nature of things, that God, in his supreme providence, should minister whatever quantity of evidence, upon every subject, he seeth fit to every person. Such person, then, decides freely, in the exercise of his free-will, upon the evidence submitted to him; but the amount of evidence, the measure, the time, the place of the evidence, all these are in the sovereign disposal of God in his providence. So that, by ministering a certain quantity of evidence to a man upon a point, the decision of the man's mind, according to the action of free-will, is secured, without any violence done to the constitution of the moral creature. He acts freely upon the evidence he has; the evidence, the quantity of it, the measure, the time, the place, all the outward circumstances connected with it, are in the sovereign disposal of God. Has any man the whole case before him, in all its bearing, direct and indirect, present and future, of any question upon which he is called to decide? No such thing; the man must needs look through futurity into eternity, to see all the bearings of his conduct: but upon what he does see, he acts freely. O, verily God is a God that hideth himself while he revealeth himself.

My dear brethren, one of my objects at this time is, to implore you not to be turned back from the simplicity of faith, by plausible talk about the unreasonableness of admitting mysteries. It is a time when the foundations of our faith are sifted; it is a time when we, who are the authorized teachers of the faith, ought to grapple with these siftings, and go to the foundations themselves. It is a time

when we should be prepared to stand in our places, and meet the diversity of attacks that are made upon our faith; not by railing for railing, but by sound teaching; that the minds of our people, being in possession of the subject, may be fortified, not to retort against error, but to reject the error, and to be quiet.

Now let us take another point in which God verily hideth himself while he revealeth himself, and in which we must again find a mystery: it is in THE RICHES OF HIS ATONING LOVE IN JESUS CHRIST.

We now come to use expressions with which you are more familiar; but if you will examine the expressions, you will find that they involve you in a mystery, as dark and as inexplicable as either of the two we have hitherto touched upon—either the Trinity of the persons, or the absolute sovereignty of disposal in the Godhead. “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life:” “In this was manifested the love of God, that he gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins:” “He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” He hath laid our sins upon him, and his blood “cleanseth from all sin.” What statements are these? For “sin is the transgression of the law:” the law is the expression of God’s eternal mind and truth: not one jot or one tittle of the law can be made void; it must all be fulfilled; it must all be magnified as the expression of the righteous character of God. An offence against that high and glorious declaration of God’s character is an offence against himself, the Infinite God. The demerit of the offence must bear proportion to the dignity of the person offended.

Look how this may be simply illustrated in human things. Suppose a man were to commit an offence consisting of the act of striking another man; the punishment justly awarded to that offender will vary with the dignity of the person struck. If the man struck were an equal, his punishment is comparatively light. Suppose the offender were a soldier; if

the man struck be his commanding officer, his punishment is enhanced: if the man struck were the king, his offence is high-treason, the punishment is death. Now mark; the offence was the same throughout; it was striking a man; but the punishment varies with the position and dignity of the man struck: so that from a petty fine, or a short imprisonment, for striking one man, the punishment is magnified into death for striking another man.

Apply this to an offence against the Infinite God, and see what sort of a punishment such an offence calls for: and who shall bear that punishment? Lay it upon a finite creature—it will take him through all eternity to endure, and he will never have finished it; for, the punishment being infinite, it must either be infinite in quantity or infinite in time. A finite creature can have but a finite quantity, and therefore he must have an infinite time. Who shall endure that punishment so as to make an end of it? Whoever does it must have infinite power; and yet the punishment to be endured which a man deserves for breaking the law of God, must be such a punishment as a man can feel, such punishment as can attach itself to the constitution of a man; and yet we have seen that it must be such as can appeal with infinity to claim merit before God. Who shall endure it, if there is not a person to endure it, who, while he has a divine nature to give infinity to every pang, has a human nature to give infinity to every pang; so that every suffering shall apply to us, and have merit with our God? If there be not such a sufferer, there is no salvation. And how can there be such a sufferer? Here is the mystery—the mystery of the holy incarnation. The incarnation is the proximate mystery of redemption. Who can explain it? God and man one person: as soul and body compose one man, God and man composing one Christ; so that the lash of the broken law shall take effect on human flesh, and the reproaches deserved by fallen men shall break a human heart; and yet the person who has human flesh to be lacerated, and a human heart to be broken, shall have merit wi-

God, and shall, instead of being exposed to the punishment throughout eternity, be able to concentrate and to exhaust the punishment at once.

Here is a mystery. Now, I am well persuaded, that it is because of being involved in this very mystery, that so many of our reasoning and educated fellow countrymen and fellow sinners are, in mind, if not avowedly in creed, rejecting the peculiarities of the atonement. But where is the reason, where is the judgment, where is the superior discernment, of refusing the proximate lesson, because of being involved in an ultimate mystery? Let me appeal again to the astronomer and to the anatomist; and let me send these reasoning Socinians, or others, who reject the atonement because of the mystery—let me send them back to school, to learn where there is any science without a mystery. Let us turn them to their own hearts, to see how the movement of some mysterious visitant within shall enable them to move the fingers and hands without; and when they have explained all this, and made it perfectly clear, then let us hear their reasoning (but not before) against a mystery in religion.

And yet again: when the glorious statements connected with the work and person of Jesus Christ, God and man in one person, are made in the hearing of men, they proclaim such a manifestation of God's love towards man, as is calculated to put every reasonable being upon a moral trial: enough is done for every man that has the reason of a man, and that hears the Word of God, to put him upon a moral trial—a trial between the love of sin and the love of God; the love of God manifested in Christ, and claiming the sinner's love in return, and the love of sin, experienced in the heart and flesh, holding the sinner a willing captive. To this the Saviour appeals when he says, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." He that hath natural capacities to hearken to other subjects, to be influenced by what he hears, to be induced to undertake self-denying labours upon the authority of evidence given, and the practical power of that evidence over his moral composition—he that hath

ears so to hear, in human matters, let him exert those moral powers in this greater matter, and let him hear the love of God manifested in his Son. Thus all who hear the gospel are put upon a fresh trial: they are transferred from the comparatively untried state of Tyre and Sidon, into the deeper trial of Chorazin and Bethsaida. The result of that truth, owing to the corruption of human nature, is, according to the Word of Truth, that men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil; and that they all, with one consent, begin to make excuse. Then what must be the consequence? If all, with one consent, begin to make excuse, if it be the universal characteristic that they love darkness rather than light, then is the light cast out. And so it would be, but that, in that moral trial, when every reasonable being who hears the words of the gospel, is put, as it were, upon a moral pivot, on which he is to turn one way or other, and incline to the love of God or the love of sin—when the love of sin has overcome him, brings him down, and he is making excuses, when they are all, with one consent, making excuses—then comes the grace of God, the effectual energy of salvation, by the power of the Holy Ghost, turning the sinner on the right side of this pivot, and securing him to God for ever.

This is the way of salvation; if it were not for this, there would be no salvation at all, after all that Christ has done. This is the transcribing into the book of the church, the names that are written in the book of life.

**THIS IS GOD, IN THE ENERGY OF HIS SAVING POWER, BY THE HOLY GHOST.** Now here there is a mystery; for if man be so fallen, that the moral trial he is put upon by the statements of redemption in Jesus Christ, would invariably turn against him, and if God knows this, then it seems to our reasoning mind very like a mockery of our misery; and indeed it is so denounced by many. Here the real reason is, that they will not have a mystery: they will judge God to be a God that does not hide himself; but that while he proclaims himself a Saviour, he should leave nothing still hidden.

Whereas, though known as a Saviour, he is yet a God that hideth himself in many particulars, and in this among the rest. There is honesty in his invitations, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." There is honesty in the statement, "As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. Why will ye die?" There is honesty in the command, "Repent and believe the gospel, and ye shall be saved." There is honesty in the promise, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you;" and there is truth in the statement, that, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." And here is a mysterious connexion between the possession of the outward means and the reception of the inward power. It is in the means, and yet not invariably in the means. "Faith cometh by hearing;" yet not to all that hear. How is this? God, verily thou dost hide thyself from us. And shall we refuse these facts upon the face of revelation, because the admission of them involves us in a mystery? Let me ask again, where is the superior discernment of this, where is the judgment in this case: to blot out these pages from the Bible, because they involve us in a mystery by their admission—or again to admit that we are as little children, and to receive the facts of our divine philosophy? The facts of our divine philosophy are the verses and the chapters of this book; and he is no philosopher who would reject a single fact, because it involved him in a difficulty, or opposed some previous theory. Nay, how is all sound philosophy followed, and prosecuted unto truth, but by holding men's theories in abeyance, under the command of fresh facts, so that fresh facts shall rectify theories, and theories shall be prostrated before facts? And so should men's judgment be before verses of the Bible; for these are facts from God.

Now one expression more, one topic briefly touched upon, is necessary here, I perceive: for the force of the moral demonstration I am offering you step by step, evidently rests on the reception of this book as God's revelation. If a man say, "I deny these verses are revelation,"

the subject matter of the dispute is altogether changed immediately. I should only say of such persons, or of such a state of things, at present, that the evidence for the revelation is not mysterious. The evidence for the fact of the revelation is let down to the men; it stands on historical testimony; it stands in its miraculous authority before the eyes of men, corroborated by facts, and handed down by authentic testimony. It stands in such a moral demonstration, connected with the character of the first promulgators of the truth, as involves the men who deny the revelation in greater absurdity of credulousness, than those who receive it. But that is not our present subject; it is a separate and important subject in its own place. All I am concerned to say about it at present is, that the evidence for the origin of the revelation is not mysterious; it is let down within the reach of human science and human inquiry, and any man who refuses to inquire about it, and denies it in ignorance, deserves the consequences.

Here, then, my brethren, I have invited you to contemplate God in these four aspects in which he is set before us: some statements in each made clear, brought forward into the front ground of the picture; and in each a mystery hanging, in the dimness of the horizon, upon us. And what would we have as creatures? Would we stand upon such a pinnacle, that there shall be no horizon? "Vain man would be wise, though he be born like the ass's colt:" and because he has intelligence enough to perceive that there is a mystery, and pride enough to refuse to submit to it, he abuses the reason and intelligence in the pride of refusing what he might know, because he cannot know what God still keeps secret. Be ye reconciled to mysteries; and be ye satisfied with revelation. These are the statements, my brethren, this is the view of things, this is the combination of truth, for which our forefathers bled in this land: without attempting to explain the mysteries, they asserted and reasserted the facts of the case. You find them in the formularies of the church:—the person of God, declared with simplicity and

plainness, and not attempted to be explained; the sovereignty of God proclaimed with equal simplicity and plainness, in the evident purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus; the all-sufficiency of the atonement in the blood of Jesus, proclaimed distinctly; and the mysterious combination of God and man in one person, declared, but not explained; and the invincible energy of the power of the Holy Spirit in winning the will of the sinner. And being made willing in the day of God's power, he shall run in the way of God's commandment, and delight in the knowledge of God himself; and so go on in good works, arising out of the love of God in his heart, and dictated by the glory of his heavenly Father in this life, unto eternal salvation: I say these are the statements for which our fathers bled in this land; these are the boundary marks which they have set up for us to exclude "philosophy falsely so called," and to exclude, on the other side, the abuses of the mystery to which I briefly alluded at first, by heaping up more mysteries, and more mediators, which the Romish system had so largely introduced. Armed on both sides we are in the formularies of the church, we have, in truth, been but exhibiting in a more enlarged form, and rendering with more distinctness to your understandings, as God hath permitted me, the statements which are compressed into an attitude of defence against heresy in the formularies of the church. Hold them fast: meddle not with them who love to change such truths. My brethren, it is most deplorable to think how the best things become abominable, when abused by man's mismanagement; and there is no instance of this more deplorable than the way in which these very formularies of the church have been abused—the way in which the church itself has been abused—the way in which that which ought to have been for the salvation of the united empire, has, through negligence, through slothfulness, through pride, through unbelief, through worldly-mindedness, become the cause of contention, and is likely to be the cause of strife and even danger in the land.

You are aware of the sentiments it has pleased God to allow me to utter in this place, to many of you who were present on the late occasions. Now, my dear friends, I desire exceedingly to bear in mind myself, and to call the attention of our fellow men throughout this land, were it in my power so to do, to the retribution of Divine Providence in the alarm that is spread, and the danger that hovers over the church in the sister kingdom. How frightfully she has neglected her duty! With what awful apathy hath she sat by while millions of her fellow creatures were ignorant of the language, the only language they could speak, without making a vigorous ecclesiastical effort to preach the gospel to the people in their own tongue! How hath she reposed in her ease and quietness within her various mansions, while hundreds and thousands of the people have been like sheep going astray without a shepherd, or left to the prowling wolves who would devour and rend them! And now, when the retribution comes, when the hand of God is turned to chastise the neglected daughter, now an alarm, and next an outcry is raised. And truly, my dear brethren, the negligence deserves chastisement: but negligence in a child, and a child that is our own, a child of the same family, of the same sentiments, based on the same foundation, belonging to the same Father with ourselves—negligence does not call for destruction. For amendment; chastisement unto amendment is a righteous thing. We see in the progress how God works: he is a God that "hideth himself" from those that will not see; but in his ways there is a revelation to those who will see. We see the righteous retribution of Providence, the trouble coming where negligence has been long practised. You find it in your own affairs, in your relative and domestic condition, throughout all your business: if in any particular you have been negligent, if, after repeated warnings, you have continued negligent, be sure thy sin will find thee out; domestic trouble, relative losses, failures in business, disappointment among friends—these will be the inevitable consequences of continued

negligence in business, or inattention to the practical duties of friendship. And the church as a body is no exception to this rule: let negligence be practised more and more, let warnings be rejected, let neglect be persevered in, in despite of warning, and the secret reproaches of conscience; and I say, God forbid that our Father should not chastise. If we were left to ourselves we should be ruined. I believe it is in the righteous chastisements of a wise and watchful Father that the preservation of the child consists.

You are aware of the peculiar object connected with our present meeting together in this place, as regards the continuance and ease of your assembling yourselves together here, and the relief of this place of worship from a debt that still hangs over it. It is connected with what I have been saying. If the truth I have been telling you is the truth preached from this place; if this be (as we believe it is) a member of the church we belong to, the formularies of the church honoured here, the truth of God proclaimed within these walls—then, brethren, by all the value you set upon this truth, I would again avail myself of this last lingering opportunity of addressing you (it may be) for a considerable period, to ask your liberality to free this place from this encumbrance. The days of large endowments seem to be at an end. Men talk of despoiling the church of her endowments, but we hear of few who endow her afresh as some of our forefathers endowed her. There have been men of large possessions in this world, who have built such places as this, and larger places than this, from their own private resources. Sacrifices they must needs have made; but they had a Master who recompensed them for the loss, if it could be called a loss. Alas, how closely calculating have our pecuniary sacrifices become for the sake of the gospel, and with what rigid economy do we dole out help for such occasions as the present!

Bear this reproach, my brethren: it is not said in unkindness to you personally—far from it; but from a feeling in which I participate with shame. While we so

talk about what is to be done with the endowments that our forefathers gave, the age of endowments seems to be gone entirely. What! shall the shade of popery rise up, and say with scorn and contempt at our better creed, “*We were the endowers chiefly; we were they that gave thousands to build places of worship; and you find it difficult to gather 2 hundred pounds to clear a debt.*” Take away the reproach, as far as lies in you, as regards this place at least; and let the collection now made, be made from liberal hearts and loving hearts, to the honour of Him who is worshipped here in spirit and in truth.

My dear friends, I thank God for this renewed, and (as I have already hinted) for the present, the last opportunity of declaring these truths in your ears. I believe—and not from mere fancy, but from very satisfactory and delightful evidence from time to time conveyed to me—that he hath not suffered me to speak altogether in vain from this place. Hearts there are which have been touched and melted under the truth, and which have thanked God in secret, and who have from time to time given expression of their sentiments to myself also, of what the Lord has done for them under the ministry of the Word from my unworthy lips. Blessed be the Lord God Almighty, the Saviour, for these things! I shall bear an affectionate remembrance towards the flock assembling in this place: and I would affectionately entreat you to bear me upon the sacrifice and service of your faith before God; that, in the large and populous sphere where I am now called to labour,\* God would help me with great power and teaching of his Holy Spirit to speak the truth in the love of it, with singleness of heart, to honour God, and to desire the salvation of all who shall be intrusted to my charge. Dear Christian friends, pray that it may be so: and I beseech our God, in the tender love of his dear Son Jesus Christ, to minister to all your hearts in all the affectionate anxieties that you feel in private about your friends and relations; in all the trembling apprehensions that you experience for your

\* St. Mary's Church, Liverpool.

own souls; in all your doubtfulness respecting his truth, and labouring study of his word: praying for divine teaching, in all the difficulties of your relative situations, in all the turmoil of necessary business, and the frequent interruptions of those meditations which compose your chiefest joy: that in all these things, and the variety of the plague of the experience of the inner man in every believing soul, the unction of the Holy One may be full, and rich, and powerful, preserving you from all evil, making you diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, with all prayer and supplication for all saints—with prayer for all that are in authority, for our king, for those who rule under him, for all ministers of religion; that we may be godly and quietly governed, and in all possess a patience under the various provocations of domestic life; that you may have self-possession, self-command, self-denial, that the various little difficulties which thwart and distress from day to day, may be warded off by a willingness to yield, as far as truth will permit you, for peace' sake. As far as lieth in you, my beloved brethren, be at peace amongst yourselves, be at unity amongst yourselves. Bear with one another, remembering that uniformity is not necessary to unity. O bear with one another. There are diversities far more than in men's hearts who love the truth. You are nearer one another than you think, in conversation after: the proof is, when you kneel down to pray, how much more closely are you held together than when your conversation is controversial. O let there be more, then, of the unity of the Spirit among you, and less of willingness to discover differences. There is strength in unity: be strong in the unity of holiness among yourselves. O refrain from all sin, refrain from all falsehood, from all misrepresentation in society, from all exaggeration of reports, from all slandering, from all traducing of a neighbour behind his back.

I beseech you, brethren, be ye holy, for God is holy. Walk closely with God, be much in private, secret prayer: as much as lieth in you in your various

situations of life; even in the midst of necessary business, let your hearts stir up with ejaculatory prayer, catching a blessing from God every hour of the day. Walk with God.

And what shall I say more? The time would fail me to give utterance to what my heart contains to my Christian friends. Dear brethren, the peace of God, with all that that contains, of the great God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—the blessing which is richly laden in Christ Jesus in our nature, which is conveyed in faith, which is applied and experienced in and by the Holy Ghost, the blessing of God which brings his love down, which draws your love upwards, which assimilates you to him, which conforms your character to his, and gives the mind that was in Jesus to the members of Jesus; the blessing of God which bringeth heaven upon earth, that it may take you and make you heirs of heaven—the blessing of God be amongst you!

And if there be a man or woman here present who is yet a stranger to these things, and knows not the power of this grace, may God, in his infinite mercy, render what I have now been permitted to say a blessing to such one. Let a mystery be recognised; let objections be given up; let the vain strugglings of a proud understanding be prostrated; O let your hearts be touched. Fellow sinner, believe in God, believe also in Jesus: yield to your own conscience; seek the Holy Ghost—ask, and ye shall receive, for God is true.

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MENTAL DISCIPLINE FOR DIVINES AND STUDENTS IN THEOLOGY.

I. REFLECT much on the indispensable and transcendent importance of personal religion.

II. Aim, with the most conscientious solicitude, at purity of motive in all your ministerial engagements.

III. Repress, to the utmost, the feelings of vanity and pride, and the undue desire of popular applause.

IV. Let the grand points in religion have their due prominence in your discourses.

V. Aim, in preaching, at the utmost seriousness and earnestness of manner.

VI. Let a deep sense of responsibility at the divine tribunal secure ministerial fidelity.

VII. Let there be in your discourses the utmost clearness of discrimination between the two great classes of characters of which your hearers must necessarily consist.

VIII. Let pointed appeals to the heart, and direct applications to the conscience, form a prominent feature in your discourses.

IX. Do not aim at a degree of originality to which you are not equal, or of which the subject under consideration does not admit.

X. Study assiduously the best way of access to the human mind.

XI. In your preparations for the pulpit, endeavour to derive from the subject on which you are about to preach, that spiritual benefit which you wish your hearers to receive.

XII. Attach due importance to the devotional parts of public worship, and be solicitous to conduct them in a spirit of evangelical fervour.

XIII. Cherish earnest desires, and encouraging expectations of success.

XIV. Exercise an humble and entire dependence on the promised influences of the Holy Spirit.

XV. Endeavour to adopt the most interesting and efficient methods of conveying religious instruction to the young.

XVI. Endeavour to regulate, on principles which an enlightened conscience will approve, the time devoted to pastoral visits and friendly intercourse.

XVII. Cultivate, with daily solicitude, spirituality of mind.

XVIII. Cultivate, and display, Christian zeal for the general interests of true religion, both at home and abroad.

XIX. Propose to yourself as a model the character of the apostle Paul.

XX. Guard against every approach to a sectarian and party spirit; and cherish the feeling of Christian love to all who embrace the faith and "adorn the doctrine" of the gospel.

XXI. Do full justice to the talents and excellencies of other ministers, without the spirit of rivalry or jealousy.

XXII. Deem it not justifiable for a Christian pastor to indulge, beyond certain limits, in the pursuits of literature and science.

XXIII. Suffer not the pressure of public engagements to contract unduly the exercises of private devotion.

XXIV. Guard against levity of spirit and demeanour.

XXV. Cherish the strictest purity of thought, of sentiment, and of demeanour.

XXVI. Cultivate and display the most delicate sense of honour, in all the intercourses of life.

XXVII. Remember the pre-eminent importance of prudence and discretion.

XXVIII. Study and display that courtesy, which is the essence of true politeness.

XXIX. Observe punctuality in all your engagements.

XXX. Do not hastily abandon a station of usefulness, in which you have acquired a moral influence.

*Rev. H. F. Burder.*

## SCRIPTURE ILLUSTRATIONS.

### NO. 1.

*The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.—Ps. cxxi. 6.*

MR. CARNE, in his "Letters from the East," has observed, "the effect of the moonlight on the eyes in this country (Egypt) is singularly injurious. The natives tell you, as I found afterwards they also did in Arabia, always to cover your eyes when you sleep in the open air. It is rather strange that the above passage in the Psalms should not have been thus illustrated, as the allusion seems direct. The moon here really strikes and affects the sight when you sleep exposed to it, much more than the sun: a fact of which I had a very unpleasant proof one night, and took care to guard against it afterwards. Indeed, the sight of a person who should sleep with his face exposed at night, would soon be utterly impaired, or destroyed."

## SERMON VI.

THE SOUL AN OBJECT OF BENEVOLENT SYMPATHY AND REGARD.

BY THE REV. J. E. BEAUMONT.

*"He that winneth souls is wise."*—Prov. xi. 30.

THE estimate which men form of spiritual things is very different from that which they form of temporal things. A spiritual evil is not so much the object of our alarm as temporal evil—a spiritual good is not so much the object of our ambition and pursuit as temporal good. An individual who is the victim of temporal evil excites our pity and kindles our compassion; but an individual perishing in ignorance and dying in sin, excites no compassion. Now, this is what might have been expected to have been the case, as to those who are avowedly infidels, who profess no sort of solicitude whatever, beyond that which terminates in the body and in time; but what, I say, is the case as to multitudes of those who make a profession of a belief in the inspiration of the Bible? And yet, many of those are quite indifferent to the spiritual wretchedness which is multiplied around them; and not only are they indifferent to it themselves, but they frown upon others who are endeavouring to meet it, and, in some measure to diminish it. According to them we are, by our folly, our enthusiasm, and our fanaticism, turning the world upside down. Now, there must be a great error in this, either in the faith or in the feelings of those who thus underrate our efforts—who not only do nothing towards them, but who scorn and sneer at those whose object it is to turn the sinner from the error of his ways.

I know that the objection which they bring forward, often shrouds itself under this accusation—that, what with our Sabbath Schools, and what with one thing and another, we shall absolutely

eat up the substance of the land; and that there will be nothing left to clothe the orphan, to feed the hungry, to sustain the widow; and they affect to feel a powerful sympathy with the temporal ills of mankind—with the physical wretchedness of human nature, as it is multiplied around them; and yet I will venture to say—for we cannot stop now to go into the matter, but I throw it off as an assertion and I challenge any one to the proof of it, the most learned, the most historical, the most philosophical individual present,—that Christianity, and Christianity alone, has done more for the relief of the temporal ills of mankind, than ever was done by philosophy, human reason, human policy, human sagacity, or humanity itself, from the beginning of the world down to this hour. There never was a grosser fallacy than that which would teach and represent, that the influence of Sabbath-school institutions, and kindred institutions, will dry up the sources of relief for the temporal ills of mankind. But I will venture to say this much—that as to those societies and institutions, the object of which is the relief of the physical ills of mankind, you will find it is not another set of names that occupy the reports of these institutions, from the names of those who fill the reports of your Sabbath Schools, your Bible Societies, your Mission Institutions, and your other confederacies for the diminution of spiritual evil; the fact is, they are the same individuals that contribute to both; and since the formation of Sabbath Schools and other kindred institutions, there has been far more done for the relief of the tem-

poral ills of mankind than ever was done before.

And however much we may feel affected and distressed at the thought of the abounding of human wretchedness around us, there never was a time when so many feet were actually moving to the abodes of wretchedness, so many hands actually dealing out bounty for the relief of the needy, as at this time; and, therefore, I could not this evening, if my object was to plead for one of these institutions which aim at the relief of the physical distress of mankind, render such institutions more effectual service, than by turning your attention to the spiritual evils of mankind; because I am quite sure of one thing—that the charity that shall address itself to that, will so warm and glow and dilate and expand itself there, that it will spread to the relief of all the ills of human nature.

“He,” then, saith Solomon, “that winneth souls is wise.”—Perhaps you will say to me, why take such a text as this to address us with? Why, it is a text which marks out the duty of ministers of religion. I grant, indeed, that it is our office and prerogative, and that it ought to be our daily and nightly and hourly study and labour to fill up this character. But where is the text found? Did I announce it to you as a part of the epistle to Timothy? Did I read it out of the epistle of Paul to Titus? Did I read it out of any one of the seven letters which are contained in the last book of the Bible, and which were addressed to the ministers of the seven Asiatic churches? No: I told you, that the text was in the book of the Proverbs; and that is the people’s book more than the preacher’s. And the text being found in the book of Proverbs, shows us that every man ought to address himself to this noble enterprise, and that it should not be considered as appropriate to ministers only; that it should not be considered as the peculiar and exclusive duty or prerogative of the ministers of religion, or those who fill certain offices in the church, to endeavour to win souls, but that every man is summoned to arouse himself to this noble enterprise: for the text saith, “he that winneth souls is wise.”

I propose this evening, *First*, To DIRECT YOUR ATTENTION TO THE OBJECT WHICH IS HERE PROPOSED TO OUR BENEVOLENT SYMPATHIES AND REGARD—THE SOULS OF MEN *Secondly*, To THE DUTY WHICH IS HERE ENJOINED UPON US, IN REFERENCE TO THIS OBJECT—TO WIN THEM. *And Thirdly*, WE SHALL NOTICE THE COMMENDATION THAT IS PRONOUNCED UPON THE MAN THAT WINNETH SOULS—“HE THAT WINNETH SOULS IS WISE.”

In selecting this subject, as being directly appropriate to the interesting occasion which has gathered us together at this time, I have at once in view the ultimate object of all Sabbath-school institutions; for although there are certain social and civil and domestic and intellectual advantages, which infallibly must grow out of Sabbath-school institutions, their main, their cardinal, their ultimate object, is the welfare of the souls of those who are their objects. This is what we have in view. And therefore I proceed to direct your attention to,

*First*,—THE OBJECT HERE PROPOSED TO OUR BENEVOLENT SYMPATHY AND REGARD—THE SOUL OF MAN. Where shall I begin, or what words shall I employ, in discoursing to you of the soul? for after all that philosophy and theology and poetry and oratory and history and ethics have written and said and sung about the human soul, what a mystery it is! The soul of man! Who of us understands it? In thinking on it, let us endeavour, for a single moment, to fix your attention on *the nature and frame of the human soul*. In nature, then, it is not material; it is spiritual and immaterial. Especially in addressing such an assembly as this, it would be improper to show, by any train of argument, how it is that the soul is spiritual; I will therefore adopt the only popular method of showing it, and that is, by showing that the body is divisible, or separable—that it is an aggregate of parts, a congeries of innumerable particles cemented together; and, therefore, when death ensues, the body crumbles to pieces; and that mass which we now call the body becomes disjointed, and goes into a million fragments, and these are blown and wafted hither and thither; but

the soul is a homogeneous substance—it is indivisible, insoluble, inseparable. And, therefore, when accidents happen to the body, with which the soul has now an affinity, or when a limb shall be taken away, or more limbs than one, or a considerable portion of the animal economy,—the integrity of the soul remains untouched, indivisible, inseparable. The soul remains entire. No dissociation of the several parts and particles which go to make up the mass which we call the human body, has any effect or influence whatever on the composition of the human soul,—because the soul is not matter; if it were matter, it would be soluble, it would be divisible, and its parts would go to pieces. If it were matter, it would be resolvable—if it were matter, its parts and particles would be separable; but the soul is not separable, and therefore it is not matter. And if it is not matter, it is and must be spirit; for we know of no other substances but these two—matter and spirit, flesh and mind, body and soul—these make up the whole of what we know to have any existence in the universe of God.

Now, philosophers have speculated much about the locality of the soul in the body. It was the opinion of Aristotle,—whose philosophy held such a potent sway over all Europe, and that for many centuries—that the soul of man had its local residence in the brain; and not, as the popular philosophy teaches, in the whole volume of the two hemispheres of the brain, attached to the whole mass of it in the skull; but that the soul dwelt in a small gland in the brain, which is called the pineal gland—that it abode there as a bird in a cage—and gave forth, from that very, very small glandular body, all its volitions to the nerves, the nerves to the muscles, and the muscles acted on the bones; and so he accounted for the ordinary functions of life. Whether the soul is attached to any particular portion of the brain, or whether it is connected with the whole volume of the brain, or is associated with the whole nervous structure, ramified as it is over the whole body, I know not; nor do I think Aristotle knew; nor do I know that any of the old

philosophers knew; nor am I presumptuous enough to say, that any philosophers, even at this day, know. The subject is mysterious; and all that we know is, that the soul is, somehow or other, connected with the body; and that when the soul leaves the body, the body dies, and then there ensues all those great physical changes on the body which make death so unwelcome to us. But it may be sufficient at present, just to say, that the soul, in its nature and in its frame, is infinitely superior to the body; and that while the body is nothing but an accumulation of parts and particles, the soul is, in itself, a complete substance, and undergoes no change, as to its essence, amid all the contingences to which the body may be subject. The soul is spiritual, and not material; and although it dwells in matter, it is perfectly and entirely distinct from it.

The soul of man! Shall we endeavour to form some estimate of it, by noticing its *Maker*, its origin? Think of the human soul, then, as formed for eternity—as occupying all the attributes of Jehovah in its formation—as made in the true image of God—as made next in rank and degree, though equal in blessedness, to the angelic multitude. But how has the gold become dim—how has the most fine gold been changed—how has the crown of our original dignity fallen from our head! And yet, this jewel is left, though it is now incrustated only with sin; though it is not in the condition it was when it came from the hands of its Maker, still there is that about it that tells us something of what it was. Just as the glory on the clouds of the western horizon, after the sun has set, tells us that the sun has been there, although it has set, so are there seen in the soul of man, in the wreck to which it has been subjected, traces and marks of its primeval glory and dignity. Such is the faculty of reason; and the power of conscience and the compunctions of remorse that attend the footsteps of the sinner, record the power of the human conscience still.

Shall we endeavour to think of the human soul, by forming a notion of its *capacities and faculties and properties!*

Think of its power of thought—of the recording pen of memory—of the tablet of the heart—of the creations of genius—the glow of enterprise—the light of reason—the voice of conscience; all proving to us that the soul of man is spiritual, intellectual, immaterial, immortal. You may sublimate matter even to infinity—you may throw it from crucible to crucible—you may make it perform a million of transitions as to its form and condition; but you can never produce the power of thought from matter. No modification of it will ever give rise to a single thought; but the soul has the power of thought. Think, too, of its power of knowledge. Rivers have their limits, the ocean has its bounds, but the soul of man wanders on and on, exploring invisible and distant objects. It plunges into the abysses of creation, past and present—it ascends to the very footsteps of the eternal throne, to which it has been invited by the Saviour, and is stayed there only by the glory of him who sits upon it; and if, like the child of ambition, of whom history has told us, that when he had conquered the world he sat down and wept, because there were no more worlds to conquer,—so, if the human soul ever could acquire so much knowledge as that it should suppose there was no more knowledge to gain, it, too, would weep, because it could acquire no more. If Sir Isaac Newton had been alive at this day, from the day in which he flourished, he would have been learning still. What a wonder is the human mind! and this power of knowledge, which is the prerogative of it, will be found throughout eternity to be one source of our happiness—one spring of our enjoyment.

Then, think of its *power of pleasing!* How it can charm by description—dazzle by comparison—enliven by wit—convince by argument—thrill, captivate, and carry away by eloquence! Think of its power of acting on matter—in the glow of painting—in the symmetry of architecture—in the beauty of sculpture—in the enchanting tones of music, and all the vast variety of intonations of the human voice! For, what is that which gives such endless variety to the intonations of the human

voice? It is the soul that is within—it is the flood of thought and feeling that gives to the human voice that million fold power and variety which it possesses. Think, too, of its power over matter! It can convey the spirit of discoveries to notes and tablets; and thus after the spirit shall have fluttered away from the world, it will still be acting on minds, generations off; and though it shall have left the world, yet, by having memorialized its own discoveries, and having committed them to something or other that shall hand them downward to posterity, man may be said to live onward, as it were, through an indefinite series.

But, in thinking of the soul, let me take the scriptural way, and the way which I am sure all of you will immediately sympathize with, in endeavouring to prove its value, and that is, by observing that the soul must be of inestimable value, for *its redemption has been effected by Jesus Christ*. I have intimated already, that the soul of man is lost—that man has fallen from his high estate. O, what must be the value of the soul in the estimation of Almighty God, when he did not think it too much to give his own Son in order to ransom it! God so loved the world—yes, God so loved the soul—now you shall estimate its value, if you can—God so loved the soul, that in order to redeem it and save it, he gave up his only begotten Son! O, go in devout contemplation to Gethsemane, and see the Son of God covered over with sweat and blood, and hear the plaintive accents which burst from his lips when he said, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” Follow him to mount Calvary; to the bowing of the head and the giving up of the ghost—you sun hid its face—the earth wrapt itself in mourning—the rocks burst asunder—nature to its very centre shook, and felt that her Lord was suffering and dying! O, if you can fathom the depth—if you can span the length—if you can soar to the height of the sufferings of the Son of God—if you can weigh the tears and the blood which he shed—if you can measure the sighs and the sobs that he heaved, then, but not till then, will you be able to learn the

value of the human soul ; for the Son of God gave up his life to ransom the soul of man. When we are, from certain circumstances, incapable of estimating the value of any given object that may be presented to our notice or contemplation, from our incapacity or the limited nature of our understanding and other mental faculties, if we can only find out, from some source or other, what the object cost, then we may form an idea of its value ; and though the human soul mocks our efforts and eludes our touch—and though neither poetry, nor theology, nor philosophy, nor history have ever done it justice—yet, we may know its value, in some sort, when we find out that God, in order to save it, gave up Jesus Christ, his only-begotten Son ; and we do not wonder, therefore, that Jesus Christ should exclaim, as he did, “ What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul ? ”

Again. In forming an estimate of the human soul, let us think for a moment—though this is a bewildering subject—on the *endless duration of the soul's existence*. There is only one word that can be applied to the duration of the human soul, and that is a word which you understand just as well as I do—which the peasant comprehends the meaning of as well as the philosopher—that is, the word *ETERNITY*. Eternity ! thou word of solemn and mysterious import, thou art the only word that can be applied to the duration of the soul of man ! And what is eternity ? That question has been asked again and again, and wise men and sages have answered it in different ways. I must confess that the answer that has struck me as the most appropriate, is the answer furnished by a boy in a Sunday-school. He was asked, What is eternity ? After a pause, the little boy said—not, indeed, a very little boy, but he was one attending a Sunday-school—Eternity is the lifetime of the Almighty. I defy a divine to give a better answer. I defy any man on earth to furnish a more satisfactory answer. Eternity, indeed, is the lifetime of the Almighty ! It is applicable to the lifetime of the Almighty ; as it is said *a parte ante*, and *a parte post*,

—God is eternal as to the past part of his existence. The soul, however, is not eternal in that sense—it was created coeval with the body : but *a parte post*, that is, as to the future part of its existence, the duration of the human soul to come, will run on in parallel lines with the duration of the throne of God. And as to the speculations which have been entered into by philosophers and divines, as to whether the soul is naturally immortal or not, I, for my part, can see no weight in the question ; it is no matter whether it is so naturally, as a special donation from heaven. All that we know is, that it is so, somehow or other, either naturally or as the gift of God. It is enough for us to know that the soul is immortal—that it never, *never* dies. Like a mighty river, the track of which you can follow from region to region and from soil to soil, but which, at last, bewildered, you lose, by the river entering into a deep and imbowered wood,—you can follow it no further : the wood is so thick, the forest is so dense, you cannot go after it, but you hear it dashing on by the furiousness of its roar. So it is with the human soul ; you can trace it to death, but you can go no further in your own observations. But we know that death does not terminate its existence—that it is immortal—that its existence runs on through endless ages. O, how valuable then is the human soul !

Perhaps this may suffice, on the first part of the subject—namely, the object itself which is proposed to your benevolent sympathies and exertions. I find that I am to advocate the cause, this evening, of some nine hundred of these souls. There are some nine hundred individuals who are receiving instruction in the two schools, who are making their annual appeal to your benevolence this evening ; and every one of these nine hundred souls is thus valuable, as I have stated to you, and far more valuable than any language of mine, or that of any other, can by any possibility represent : and therefore, if, before we close the subject, we should assume something like an earnestness of appeal, you will bear along with us when we come to that appeal,

because it is an appeal on behalf of nearly a thousand souls; and I ask, whether it is not an appeal which calls for something like earnestness on behalf of the individual intrusted with such an advocacy as this, and for something like liberality on the part of those to whom it is made?

I must be very brief, being well aware how many may be inconvenienced and oppressed, from the extremely crowded state of this audience, and I pass on to consider,

*Secondly*,—THE CONDUCT DESCRIBED IN THE TEXT, IN REFERENCE TO THIS OBJECT, AND RECOMMENDED TO OUR ADOPTION BY THE WISE MAN.—“He that winneth souls is wise.”

I hardly need detain you for one moment in the way of a word of caution. By winning of souls, in the text, as applied to men, we are not to understand that we can win them as principals. No; it is only as instruments and accessories. Christ is the ransom of the soul; that we have seen already, and that you will bear in your minds. He it is who hath won them—that hath bought them—that hath ransomed them—that hath purchased them—that hath done the great thing which we never could have done for them. But though we cannot win them as principals, we may win them as instruments and accessories. This is what you are summoned to labour and to attempt to do.

“He that winneth souls is wise.” This has been rendered by a French commentator,—“He that sweetly draweth souls to God, maketh a holy conquest of them:”—and of all the versions of the golden sentence which I have taken for my text, there is none that seems to me to fall in with the meaning so fully, as that of Diodoret,—“He that sweetly draweth souls to God, maketh a holy conquest of them.” Souls are not to be got by compulsion—souls are not to be driven. You may apply your instruments of torture to every inch of the surface of the body, and the body may be within sight and within feeling of death, but the soul will not be a slave, and spurns the thought of slavery. You know Mahomet pushed his conquest with the point and

two edges of the sword; and you know the mother of harlots has endeavoured to ride over the world, to enslave the intellect, and bend down the human soul, and bring souls to God in that way; but souls are not so to be got—they must be sweetly drawn, not dragged, not driven.

You know, especially as far as the children of Sunday-schools are concerned, and all other children, that a sweetness of manner is preferable to power of argument; and though the power of argument may do something with some of the more philosophical and stoical members of the human family, yet that which is to win and fascinate and touch the heart of a child, is the sweetness and softness of love. And in fact, it is that which touches the heart of any man. He that knows well the mechanism of the human heart, has told us, that the cords of love and the bands of man are what must be used; and if you want to bind a man, you must not attempt to bind him down by the cable rope of philosophical argument, but by throwing around him the soft and silken cords of love. That, and that alone, will bind a man down.

As instruments we are to labour to win souls. How, then, is it to be done?

First, We are to endeavour to win them *by instruction*—The soul of man is naturally ignorant. Knowledge is wanted—knowledge is delightful to the mind—knowledge is agreeable to the soul as light is to the eye or honey to the palate. The soul of man when first created was created in the image of God—in the image of his knowledge. Now, I know that it is possible that knowledge might be communicated by miracle; but I have no right to expect that it will be so communicated. God might communicate knowledge to the mind of man directly, as he did to the minds of the prophets and apostles. There was a direct communication of knowledge, of the material, the element of knowledge—a direct inspiration into the minds of the prophets and apostles; but we have no reason whatever to suppose, that in that way knowledge will ever be communicated again. Knowledge is to be communicated, now, from mind to mind—from one to another.

Thus the very prophets were to communicate what they had to the people; and thus the apostles were to go into all the world, to communicate their knowledge to every creature. Thus, then, the man who has knowledge is bound to communicate it to the man who has not.

And as to the method of communicating instruction, especially in a Sabbath-school—I am not talking about other schools—the language should be plain, familiar, and simple. Illustrations may be brought from science and nature; but this we must take care to do in such a way as to make all these, as instruments, subservient to spiritual good. In the month of July or August, if you saw a corn field covered with flowers of every hue and size and colour, the spectator might be gratified with the sight, and the mere traveller might be amused with the spectacle; but not so the owner—the proprietor, the farmer—he would have every flower torn up by the root, and thrown over the hedge—he does not want his field covered with poppies, but with wheat.

Plainness of speech, then, is necessary. It is remarked by Job Orton, in his Memoirs of Dr. Doddridge, that, having once preached about the primitive Christians, when one day, walking, a person came up to him and asked, what sort of Christians the primitive Christians were? “I told him,” said the biographer, “they were the first Christians; and I took care, ever after, to use the phrase, first Christians, and not the primitive Christians.” And so it is as to children:—we should use easy and not hard words—words easily cut on the tablet of the memory, not those which are so tortuous as that they cannot be engraven in the youthful mind. We should teach them the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Parents, fathers, mothers, Sunday-school teachers, masters, altogether, should adopt the resolution of the apostle, who thus expresses himself,—“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” “We preach Christ,” in the dignity of his person, in the fulness of his love, in the excellence, in the perfection of his sacrifice, and in the power of his Spirit—Christ first, Christ last, Christ the mid-

dle, Christ the beginning, Christ the end. Nothing will touch the heart of a child so soon, or so deeply, as to hear the story of the Babe of Bethlehem—of the Man of Sorrows on the hill of Calvary, in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea! Thus, then, let us communicate instruction, and by knowledge labour to win the souls of the children.

Secondly, We must do it *by persuasion*: for the soul is not only ignorant, but perverse. Its ignorance calls for illumination, and its perverseness and obstinacy call for entreaty and persuasion. Therefore, we are to employ, as the means of persuasion, every argument and motive that can be drawn from the soul, in all its value—the love of God in giving his Son in order to save it—the solemnities of death—a day of judgment—the glory of heaven, and the terrors of hell. You must take the unconvinced up to mount Sinai, that he may gaze on the mountain burning with fire; but you must take the humble and meek and penitent, to mount Calvary; and let the thunders of Sinai be quenched by the sweet accents of Calvary. Do not represent Sinai and Calvary as two hostile forts, but as two impregnable fortresses, to break down ignorance, depravity, and sin. An air of seriousness finely softened down with affectionate tenderness, is that which we ought to endeavour to cultivate. Never court a grin when you should win a soul. Seriousness of manner, combined with affectionateness of spirit, are the charms we are to employ—the artillery we are to command. We are to clothe our words with plainness, seriousness, and affection; that an impression may be made on the minds of those to whom we direct our instructions.

Once more. It is our duty to endeavour to win souls *by admonition*.—It is said of the venerable Eli, who in many respects was an excellent character and a good man, that he did not admonish his children. It is necessary, sometimes, to rebuke with all authority and all earnestness; and Eli whispered when he should have thundered, and was all blandness and softness when he should have been all authority and majesty. There are

times when we should use all the authority which God and providence and grace have intrusted to us. Thus by solemn admonition, as well as by gentle persuasion and the words of instruction and wisdom, we should endeavour to be instrumental in winning the souls of our fellow creatures.

But, *thirdly*, and lastly, I go on to stimulate you to this by THE EULOGIUM WHICH THE WISE MAN IN THE TEXT PRONOUNCES ON THE CONDUCT OF THOSE WHO WIN SOULS—"He that winneth souls is wise."

Now, wisdom has very great reputation among mankind: it has so high a reputation, that you cannot pay a man a higher compliment than to say that he is a wise man. Mankind have that feeling about the matter, and all are exceedingly sensitive about their reputation for wisdom and knowledge; and hence, you cannot offer a fouler reproach, a more poignant or cutting stigma to a man, than to say of him, that he is a fool: every man feels that the indignity is an intolerable one—one that cannot and will not be put up with. Such, then is the reputation of wisdom—so high—so universal. Now, Solomon says, "He that winneth souls is wise." I know very well that men differ very much about what makes up wisdom. For instance—the politician considers that the knowledge of the art of government constitutes wisdom—that the man who is well versed in historical research in the history of nations, and understands the best mode of governing states and districts and empires, is the wise man. The philosopher considers the naturalist the wise man—he who knows all the substances of the three great kingdoms of nature, animal, vegetable, and mineral,—who understands all their sympathies and antipathies, all their uses, all their good qualities and all their bad ones—who has taken the gauge of every substance in nature, from the sun down to the meanest atom that floats in the air, from the smallest insect that dances in the sunbeam to the gigantic elephant that stalks on the surface of the earth—who has studied nature and her laws, the chain of cause and effect, and can determine the

relative value of one substance to all other substances around it; that is the man the philosopher supposes to be the wise man. Again: the moralist considers the knowledge of ethics as wisdom; that is, the knowledge that leads him to understand his own nature, and the laws which are binding on society in general; and his duties and obligations towards God, his fellow creatures, and all rational and intelligent beings. Now, then, who does the Bible pronounce to be the wise man? Is it your politician—versed in historic lore, competent to determine the fate of empires? Is it the naturalist or philosopher or chemist—the man who understands every thing in nature? Is it the moralist? Is it your ethical man? Is it your man who understands the laws of the different relations binding the different orders of society? No, my friend. Who, then, does the Scripture pronounce to be the wise man? I will tell you—first, the man who saves his own soul—and, secondly, the man who labours to save the souls of others.

First, The Scriptures pronounce that man to be wise, *who saves his own soul*. That was a benevolent expression of the man, Moses, which he uttered with regard to the Israelites; when, after having led them for forty years during their peregrinations in the wilderness, he said, "O, that they were wise."—In what sense? "O, that they understood this—that they would consider their latter end!" The man who is wise for time, but not for eternity—wise for business, but not for salvation—wise for the body, but not for the soul, is not a wise man. A man may be highly gifted—a man of talent: well, call him so, and have done with it; but call him not a wise man if he has not religion. A man may be rich and opulent; but if he neglects his soul and religion, call him not a wise man; call him a rich man, and have done with it. A man may have the gift of eloquence—the power of persuasion and of moving others around him may be hid under his tongue; very well, say he is an eloquent man, and have done with it; but if a man has not religion, he is not a wise man. No man is wise but the man who saves his soul

and prepares for eternity. It will be found, hereafter, to have been the most egregious, the most monstrous, the most atrocious folly in the universe, for a man to have neglected the interest of his soul—to have been absorbed in the claims of his body, the claims of commerce, the claims of business, or any other claims whatever, whilst he has neglected those of his soul.

Secondly, The text pronounces that man to be wise, that is *instrumental in winning the souls of his fellow creatures*. I have not time to go into this; but there are three views which I meant to have taken, to follow up this doctrine in the text. First, I meant to have shown you, that such a man, in his conduct, is promoting the honour and glory of God, and on that account may fairly be pronounced a wise man. Secondly, that such a man connects himself with the coming in of the mediatorial reign of our Immanuel, and on that account is to be termed a wise man. And, lastly, that the man who wins the souls of his fellow creatures, is the best friend of the human race, and most effectually promotes the welfare of mankind around him. Wherever souls are overlooked, there is a limit put to intellectual and social improvement, and ignorance becomes perpetuated.

Perhaps you may ask, what is the advantage that results from all this Sabbath-school instruction? The fact is, that we are too impatient. In husbandry and benevolence, matters are the same. In matters of husbandry and agriculture, the farmer has to wait for the return of his labour. The fact is, that the process of Bible education is going on in these nine hundred children, and this Bible education is very much like the process of engraving. Engraving is a slow process: the engraver works upon the metal, and perhaps it is many days or weeks before the effects are visible on the surface, and not even after months of toil, unless you hold the surface in some particular direction, so that the light may fall on it in a particular way. But the engraver goes on working at his task, and by-and-by, after weeks and months, it starts up at last like a thing of life. So it is with these child-

ren. Engraving is going on upon these nine hundred souls. A moral, religious, and Bible education is being communicated to them, by the instrumentality of this institution; and we must not be too impatient as to the results that will follow.

I might advocate the cause, on the ground of its tending to the due observance of the Sabbath. How many of these children would be profaning the day of the Lord—would be blaspheming the name of the Lord—would be corrupting the air with their breath; but now they are sitting at wisdom's doors, and are drinking in knowledge and instruction, communicated to them by men of like passions to ourselves, who, from love to their souls, are endeavouring to be instrumental in saving them.

Again. These schools are of considerable value in producing habits of social order and the worship of God, in many families who were strangers to it before. I was once at a meeting at Nottingham, when a man stood up to give the account of his conversion to God. Laying his hand on the head of a boy who was by the side of him, he said, "This boy is my son, and this, my son, is my spiritual father. He went to your Sunday-school some years ago. One Sabbath evening, when he came home, he said, 'Father, if I die before you and go to heaven, I am afraid I cannot stretch out my hand to welcome you there.'—'Why not?'" said the father, struck with the observation. "'Because,' said the boy, 'the teachers at the Sunday-school, and the Bible, and the preacher, all tell me, that swearers and Sabbath-breakers and drunkards, living and dying such, must, in the next world, be in a place of torment.'"—Conviction seized the mind of this man, as he told us; he found his own way to the chapel; and the impressions that were made upon him there, together with what his little boy had said, were the means, under God, of his conversion.

I believe a great deal of this is going on now. I know that it is the order of nature for parents to teach their children; but I know it is an order that the God of nature and grace often smiles upon and

bleses for the children to teach their parents. I do not mind how the matter goes on, so that it does go on. It is with this as it is with the dew. Some say that the dew falls down—that it comes from the sky; but according to the most abstract and recondite philosophers, dew rises up from the earth—it ascends and does not descend. I do not care whether it is down or up, or up or down, or down and up, or up and down, or both, so that it does but come, and enough of it, to refresh all the waste places of the earth. So with regard to knowledge—I do not care which way it is, whether it goes from the parents to the children, or from the children to the parents, or both ways: any way, every way—the more the better.

I trust the friends of this school will have no feeling towards other institutions of the same kind, except that of a kindly one. There are many other Sunday-schools besides our own, in the neighbourhood, and there is a great necessity for them; and for the friends and teachers of this school to have any other feeling towards the teachers of other schools, than a most friendly one, would be just as foolish as for the members of the same family to fall out with one another because they do not all happen to be of one size, complexion, or intonation of voice. The fact is, we all belong to one human family.

Still, you want to know what are the fruits? The fact is, we are only sowing the seed; and the principles of virtue and piety which are cast into the minds of these nine hundred children, remain there, concealed for a while; but they will awaken, in some, new associations of life, and then there will be all the harvest you anticipate. I remember some time ago, conversing with an individual who had been in Ireland, and who related the following fact to me. A little girl of Catholic parents found her way to the Protestant Sunday-school: there she made considerable progress, and she obtained a copy of the Testament as a present:

that Testament she read, felt, and understood. One day the priest came into the house, and saw the book on the table: he immediately laid his hands upon it, and said, "What is that?"—"That," said the mother, "is a book that has been given to my little girl by somebody." The priest found out what the book was—proceeded to the fire—put it into the fire—and stood by it till the element of destruction had completed its work. The little girl then burst into tears, because her Testament was burned; and the mother wept, because she sympathized with her daughter; and while mother and daughter were both in tears, that minister of mercy walked away. Well, the little girl felt so much for her mother, that she turned to her, and said, "Do not be so much distressed; for although the priest has burned the Testament, I have got the first nine chapters of the gospel of St. Matthew by heart, and they cannot burn them!"—Give the children that which cannot be burned. Amen.

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## SCRIPTURE ILLUSTRATIONS.

NO. II.

*Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me.*—Isa. xxvii. 5.

I think, (said Mr. Toller, when preaching from this text,) I can convey the meaning of this passage, so that every one may understand it, by what took place in my own family within these few days. One of my little children had committed a fault, for which I thought it my duty to chastise him. I called him to me, explained to him the evil of what he had done, and told him how grieved I was that I must punish him for it. He heard me in silence, and then rushed into my arms, and burst into tears. I could sooner have cut off my arm than have then struck him for his fault: he had *taken hold of my strength*, and he had *made peace with me*.

## SERMON VII.

### NECESSITY OF WATCHFULNESS.

BY THE REV. J. BLACKBURN.

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF A SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEACHER, WHO DIED SUDDENLY AT THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL, ON THE PRECEDING LORD'S DAY MORNING.

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*“Watch ye, therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.”*  
—Mark xiii. 35, 36.

In the Holy Bible, which we acknowledge to be a revelation from God, there are found, my brethren, many solemn and affecting addresses, tending to prepare our minds for the good pleasure of our God, and for those eternal realities which sooner or later shall open to our view. “Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!” is an admonition that has again and again been sounded in our ears; and that preparation has been called for upon the evidence of our frailty; for “the voice said, cry: and the prophet said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass.” But we are so familiar with exhortations of this sort, that they pass by us as idle words, and we regard them not: they seem to us as tales that have been again and again told, which command not even our attention, and glide over our minds as the arrow cuts through the atmosphere, without leaving a trace behind. God might leave us with the testimony of his word: he might say, “I have called, but they have not heard: let them alone; I will give them up to the desire of their own hearts.” But no; while he is a just God, he is also a Saviour; he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth. “As I live,” saith the Lord, “I desire not the death of

the sinner, but that the wicked turn from his wicked way, and live. Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die, O house of Israel?” And, prompted by this benevolence, he departs sometimes from the ordinary procedures of his providence, and permits some splendid illustration of our own mortality to befall us. We foolishly imagine that the old, the diseased, and victims of premature decay, will first pass from the stage of life to the gloomy sepulchre: and we look upon the healthful, and the robust, and the young, with feelings of extraordinary interest, imagining that they are to continue when their forefathers have passed away. But God comes out of his place; I say, sirs, he comes out of his place, and commands the dart from his unerring hand to smite the young and the healthy, and the most blooming among us, while his word addresses every spectator of the tragic event. “Because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with a stroke; for then a great ransom cannot deliver thee.”

My brethren, this is the view that I take of the solemn providence which has brought so many of you together this night. You have heard from this desk, again and again, the faithful warning of God's blessed word; you have heard, again and again, the admonition of his ministers, entreating you for Christ's sake to be reconciled unto God: and you have heard without emotion and without re-

penance. God has now shown you, in a striking manner, how frail you are, and that there is but a step between you and death. You have seen that benevolent occupation, even within the precincts of the sanctuary, cannot preserve you from the shaft of death; and that one who came to the house of God to impart knowledge to others, whose feet stood on the threshold of the sanctuary, just ready to approach to the altar of God, was not secure, even there, from that stroke which shall ere long level in the dust every one that now hears me. Who may be next summoned at the bidding of Jehovah, God only knows: whether he who speaks, or those who are congregated to hear. But this we know, that admonitions, such as are contained in our text, become doubly necessary under such a providence; and if we seek not instruction from such an event, we shall be guilty of strange neglect; indeed, of criminal apathy: and if the word of God, illustrating his providence, and his providence giving weight and solemnity to his word, do not impress us—O, my hearers, say what more can be done!

Allow me, then, faithfully to address you this evening, in connexion with this solemn subject. I shall notice from the text, *first*, THAT IT IMPLIES A DANGEROUS HABIT—THAT OF SLUMBERING. *Secondly*, THAT IT ANTICIPATES AN AWFUL EVENT—THE COMING OF THE MASTER UPON THOSE WHO SLUMBER. And, *thirdly*, IT COMMANDS AN IMMEDIATE DUTY—"Watch and pray, lest the Master, coming suddenly, find you sleeping."

In the *first* place, I observe, THAT OUR TEXT SUPPOSES A DANGEROUS HABIT OF SLUMBERING.

"If he sleep, he shall do well," said the disciples to Jesus, concerning their friend Lazarus. David said, "God giveth to his beloved sleep." And we know that, "The sleep of the labouring man is sweet." How, then, can we speak of it as a dangerous habit? My brethren, you perceive at once that it is not of bodily repose, but of *spiritual* slumber, that our text speaks. Jesus refers to that mental lethargy by which so many of our fellow creatures are lulled; and in which, I fear, some of you are slumbering on the very

verge of perdition. I shall first attempt to show *how this lethargy is produced*.

As there is a *two-fold* method of producing slumber for the body, so also for the mind. The former is the natural effect of *abundant toil and labour*: and the second is by *the influence of deadly opiates*. Man gains sleep either by the fatigue of nature, which demands it, or by the narcotic influence of drugs, which constrain it.

Let me speak, then, *of those abundant labours that wrap you in spiritual slumbers*. The labours and cares of the world occupy you from hour to hour: you rise in the morning, and hurry to your families, your warehouses, and your offices; there the cares and claims of business occupy the day; and after the excitement and the anxieties of worldly business, you are ready to say, Well, I have no time for religion. The Bible is neglected, prayer is restrained, the sanctuary is forsaken; and, even on the Sabbath day, it may be, that some of you forsake the house of God with this apology, "I work hard all the week, and I want a little pleasure on the Sabbath day." Yes; thus your abundant labours bring on a spiritual lethargy, and cause your soul to sleep. You so fatigue yourself by rising up early and late taking rest; ye mothers and mistresses, by asking yourselves, What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?—ye masters, by asking yourselves how you shall get wealth, how you shall prosper in your lawful calling; that ye drown the consciousness of eternity in the things of time; and,

"Let Christ, and grace, and glory go,  
To make your lands and money sure."

Is not this a solemn, but a faithful representation? Do you not thus yield to a slumbering lethargy, and forget God, and heaven, and hell, amidst the bustle and turmoil of earthly things? I know you will tell me that I cannot understand the claims of business, and that I do not know what it is to embark on the fearful whirl pool that is rushing round this mighty metropolis, and which makes all who embark upon it dizzy and unconscious

But this I do know, that it shall profit a man nothing if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul. What can a man give in exchange for his soul? Let me rather live in obscurity and privation; let me rather die neglected in a workhouse, and have the smile of God upon my brow, when the sweats of death glitter there, and enjoy the ministrations of angels to waft my spirit from the transient scenes of this life to a blessed immortality, rather than grasp all the world can give, and die without the friendship and the benediction of God!

But there is another mode by which men seek slumber, and that is *by the use of deadly opiates*. I believe narcotics are supposed to diminish the animal sensibility, and to suspend the nervous influence, and so to superinduce sleep. Now, it is very certain that there are moral opiates which lull the minds of men under a religious stupor; which allay their susceptibility of impression and feeling; which, in fact, if we could give them words, would say, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace; which say, "Peace and safety," when sudden destruction cometh upon them. Let me speak of a few of these things.

There are *the false notions of God* which men entertain. They think that he is altogether such a one as themselves; that he is as short-sighted as they are; that he is as careless as they are; that he is as changeable as they are; that he is as indolent as they are. If they did not think of God thus, they would not act as they do: but they say, "Tush! God will not regard; he will not punish; he will change his mind; he is very merciful; he will not pour wrath to the uttermost on the guilty." Thus they cherish false notions of God, and dream that he will act inconsistently with that character which was, and is, and will ever continue to be, the same. Now, let me entreat you to remember, that however much you may flatter yourselves that your favourite notion of God is the correct one; yet, if it be not derived from this inspired book, the only fountain of true knowledge concerning God, you are awfully mistaken; and that, to think thus of God, is a most

dangerous delusion. Let me, therefore, entreat you to avoid all unscriptural opinions concerning God, and not to be lulled into false security by any popular nostrums concerning his mercy. O, there are fancied specifics in morals as well as in medicines, which are recommended to mankind as the things that cure an uneasy conscience, but which drown it in unconsciousness. Let me charge you not to be led astray. Read the Bible for yourselves, and take heed that you cry not, "Peace, peace," if there be no peace; "for there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

There is another class of moral opiates, which consists of *false opinions of ourselves*. Individuals argue from their circumstances: they say, "God threatens evil upon the wicked, but I have gone on; I am not plagued as other men, I am not in trouble like other men; I am healthy, prosperous, and rich; surely God would not bless me, if he were indeed so angry with me; he would not prosper me if his indignation was raised against me from day to day." But this is arguing altogether on one side the statement of the divine word. The Christian dispensation has never exhibited temporal prosperity as an evidence of the divine favour. Temporal prosperity is designed as a test of your fidelity,—as the stewards of the manifold grace of God; and, therefore, that individual who is blessed with temporal prosperity, may be alling up the measure of wrath to the uttermost by the use of that very prosperity which he thinks is a token of the divine favour. Let me entreat you, then, not to indulge in the imagination that, because God has prospered you, therefore, God regards you. O no, sirs! "The little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked." When Jesus, the Son of God, the darling of Jehovah's heart, sojourned amongst men, his circumstances were humble, his appearance mean, and his condition lowly. Could you have seen him, on your principles, you could not have supposed that he was the beloved Son of the Father. No; he was a poor, persecuted, afflicted man; but he was the heir of all things still.

Do not imagine that God prospers you because you are good, but rather inquire whether he is not trying you by the prosperity that he gives. Remember that the goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering of God leadeth thee to repentance, and ask thyself, "Shall I continue to sin against a God so merciful and gracious?"

Individuals are disposed to lull their consciences also, by the notions which they form of their own merit, and are disposed to think that *their moral qualities are such as must commend them at once to God*. This is an evil which is charged on one of the Asiatic churches: "Thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." O, my friends, do not think you are rich, but as you have the true gold; that you are increased in goods, but as you have the treasures of divine grace; or that you need nothing, but as you have the friendship of God, and all the stores which his omnipotent grace supplies. Flatter not yourselves with such mistaken opinions; they will soothe your souls into a fatal security, from which you may only wake amid the dread realities of the eternal state.

Thus have I spoken to you of this dangerous habit of moral slumber, and shown you *how it is produced*. Let us notice, in the second place, *how it is characterized*.

There must be an *imagined* security. For who would compose himself to sleep if he really felt in danger? Who would yield himself to repose, if he knew that in his house there were burning elements, ready to burst into a flame?—or, that its foundations were tottering, and that the building would soon be in ruins?—or, that an assassin was lurking near his bed, and at a secret hour would burst forth? And so, my brethren, the man that yields himself to this moral slumber does not think himself in danger. As Dr. Young emphatically says, "Men think all men mortal but themselves." They speak of diseases and dangers, but they feel not that the seeds of death are putting forth their poisonous fibres within their own vitals; and that, perhaps, ere a few weeks

or days have passed, they may fall beneath their influence. There are some of you, no doubt, who have been led to speculate about the physical cause of the death of our young friend: but let me entreat you not to be led off from the admonitions which the providence addresses to you, by speculations respecting the physical cause of death. The issues of death are from God; and science often stands abashed and confounded when she perceives that the vital spark has fled, and cannot assign the cause. Let me entreat you, therefore, not to indulge in imagined security, but to feel that between you and death there is but a step. We sometimes, on board a vessel at sea, have heard the waters, as it were, rushing against our pillow; and the thought, that there were but a few inches of oak between us and eternity, has pressed upon us. But, sirs, let me remind you that, whether on sea or land, there are but a few delicate membranes between you and eternity: the vital fluid, which pursues its course through our veins, is kept there by a substance so thin and delicate, that even our emotions may break it; and then our spirits are launched into eternity. O, then, let me entreat you not to yield to the imagined security by which these slumbers are characterized!

Then this slumber is also distinguished *by delusive dreams*. Sleep is the time for dreams. You find you have often *waking* dreams, produced by the moral lethargy which oppresses your souls. Do you not fancy joys that you never realize?—imagine pleasures that you never obtain? Do you not pursue idle fancies, and delusive speculations? My friends, let me entreat you to hear the voice of God! It is high time that you awake out of your sleep, that these visions of your fancy should pass away, and that you should realize your condition, and see where and what you are.

This spiritual slumbering is characterized also *by a death-like insensibility*. Individuals are buried, as it were, in a deep sleep. It was by such a sleep as this that Saul was enwrapped, when he lost the skirts of his royal robe. It was by such a sleep as this that Samson was

held in Delilah's lap, when the fatal shears were applied to his locks. It was in such a sleep as this that Sisera lost his life, when the treacherous nail entered into his temples. And how can you say, my friends, but that, while you are indulging in this moral sleep, you also may be betrayed. My dear friends, it is the duty of Christian ministers thus to speak to you; though you sleep; though you turn on your couch, and say, "A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep! Why do you disturb us? Why do you call us thus early to the consideration of the duties of the day?" When the angel went to the prison of Peter, he saw the apostle there, wrapt in sleep; and he smote him with his rod, and the apostle arose and followed the angel forth to daylight and liberty. But how often have the ministers of God smitten you, with the rod of his word, and cried to you, "Awake! thou that sleepest! Arise, and call upon thy God!" But you have slumbered on, and the slumber may peradventure continue, till you awake in perdition.

Let me, in the *second* place, entreat you TO ANTICIPATE THE AWFUL EVENT TO WHICH OUR TEXT REFERS—THE COMING OF THE MASTER TO THOSE WHO ARE ASLEEP.

This parable was addressed by our Lord primarily to his disciples; intimating that he was going to heaven, and that he left to them, and to the ministers that might succeed them, the government of the church; and that he entreated all his servants to be diligent and watchful, and to be prepared for his coming. The coming of the Lord is used in a *three-fold* sense. It refers to *his own appearance at the judgment*, when he shall come a second time without sin to salvation: to *his visitation of individuals and communities by calamities*; as we find, in the third chapter of Revelations, he said to the church at Sardis, "Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If, therefore, thou shalt not watch, *I will come on thee as a thief*, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee:" and to the

approach of Christ *by death*. For, though it may be said that Christ does not come to us *literally* at death, yet he comes to us by his messenger; and, as the magistrate is the representative of the king, so death comes to us as a messenger from our God and Saviour. He kills, and he makes alive; he commands death to arrest us; and with him are the issues of life; and at his girdle are the keys of the invisible world, and of death. And this general use I am making of the passage is further justified by my own conscience by the thirty-seventh verse: "And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch!"

Now, concerning this matter, we have to say, 1st, that *its season is most uncertain*. Our text tells us that we know not *when the Master comes*; as even, from six o'clock till nine; or at midnight, the second watch, from nine to twelve; or at the cock-crowing, from twelve to three; or in the morning, from three to six. There is no knowing at what hour he may come; for you observe there are four periods spoken of in one night, to impress us with this conviction, that the season may not be very distant, though the hour is most uncertain. Now, do not speculate; I entreat you not to speculate about the probability of an old age that you may never see; about the stable nature of your constitution, which you may never realize. We have often seen the strong man most unexpectedly bowing himself; and therefore I entreat you, my friends, with all affection, to remember that the season of your dissolution is most uncertain. Your sun may go down, young man, ere it has arrived at its meridian height. Your sun may set, busy and active man, while it is yet meridian day; and the darkness of eternal death may succeed all the brightness and glory of your summer's noon. Remember that Jesus has said, "Be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh."

As the season is most uncertain, so, 2dly, *its suddenness is very probable*. Our text intimates that we are to watch at all times, lest, coming *suddenly*, the Master find us sleeping. I wish it most distinctly to be understood, that I do not regard sudden death, in itself, as a mark of the

divine displeasure. It would not be very desirable that *all* Christians should die suddenly, because the world would then be deprived of a most edifying scene, the close of the Christian's life, and his calm and joyous anticipation of the coming of Christ. But sudden death, as it regards the Christian, is doubtless a blessing. O, at once to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord; to escape all the languishing of sickness; all the wearisome nights that are endured through the successive stages of a protracted disease; all the humiliating circumstances attendant upon growing infirmity; all the sorrows which accompany the parting scene; all the terrors incident to dissolution! My brethren, it would be a blessed thing for us to go, if prepared, as our young friend did, and on a Sabbath morning too; to step from the church on earth to the church in heaven. But let it be remembered, that if we are not prepared, it is a solemn visitation indeed. Was it not so to Lot's wife, when her soul felt its petrified body? Was it not so to Nadab and Abihu, when mortal fire anticipated the fire of perdition? Was it not so to Ananias and Sapphira, when their lie to the Holy Ghost brought on them a display of his divine power? Was it not so to Herod, when, amidst all his royal pomp, the angel smote him that he died? Remember, my friends, that death may surprise you unawares. It found Abel amidst the pasture scenes of the open field; the royal Eglon, when seated in his stately parlour to receive an embassy; it found Herod amidst the triumphant pageantry of a court; it found Sisera and Eutyclus, wrapt in the unconsciousness of repose; and how it will find you God only knows. Look to it, then, that it find you prepared. The Master comes suddenly. He who has provided you with support; who has given you your wages; who has afforded you the means of improvement; he will come perhaps suddenly, and say, "Give an account of thy stewardship." The wicked and slothful servant will then be confused and alarmed: "My accounts are not made up, my balances are not struck; I am not prepared for his coming:" but he shall

be answered with the stern reply, "Give an account of thy stewardship; thou mayest be no longer steward." My dear friends, this may be said to you to-night. O, realize such a surprise! Ere the morning comes; no Christian friend near you; no opportunity of calm reflection given you; but one convulsive deadly pang seizes your heart—rushes to your head; the cords of life are broken; and your spirit, naked and unprepared, is found in the presence of your God! O, my friends, realize the solemnity of such an event! be admonished by a voice from the tomb of our departed young friend, "Prepare—O, prepare to meet thy God!"

Then let me, in the *third* place, notice, that OUR TEXT COMMANDS AN IMMEDIATE DUTY: "*Watch*—for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh." "Men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself." We commend the man who anticipates the time of trial, and provides against it. We admire the prophetic prescience of Joseph, which led him to prepare a store of seven years, against the famine that was coming on all the people. We go forth in the summer, and look on the little ants that are busy laying up stores for the winter; and we think it supplies a lesson full of moral instruction. But while we see that it is a very good thing to provide against the time of trial, we allow ourselves to be unprepared. "Watch, therefore, lest the Master coming suddenly, he find you sleeping." Now, the idea of a servant's watchfulness for the coming of his master, conveys two thoughts: the *first* is, that of *efficient preparation*; the *second* is, that of *constant expectation*.

First, let me entreat you to regard an *efficient preparation for the coming of the Lord*. A message was sent to the busy king of Israel: "Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die and not live." Let that message come to you, and ask if you are prepared to die. Do you inquire what preparation I regard as necessary? Nothing short of *true religion*: repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, with all the attendant graces which God imparts with them, are essential to our preparation for the coming of

God. Let me press these upon you, my hearers. "The times," said Paul, when addressing a learned and interested audience,—“the times of this ignorance, God winked at: but now he commandeth all men everywhere to repent; because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given full assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” Surely, brethren, this command of God to all men, everywhere to repent, must include yourselves. Have you, then, been brought to that repentance which is unto life; to that repentance which needeth not to be repented of? I mean not that cold assent to a general confession, with which many are satisfied, acknowledging that they have sinned and done wickedly; but go no further. No; but I ask, Have you so felt your sinfulness, as earnestly to importune for pardon, and to crave for the mercy of God through the Lord Jesus Christ? The apostle of the Gentiles exhibited that mercy in Christ to the Corinthians, thus: “All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.” And what is the subject of that ministry? “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled unto God.” This, brethren, is the great business to which we, as the ministers of Christ, have to address ourselves, “beseeching you, in Christ’s stead, to be reconciled unto God;” to seek for pardon through his atoning sacrifice; to ask for grace through his effective intercession. Nor can we omit to name, as another part of an efficient preparation, that devotedness to our Master’s service and cause, which the New Testament plainly enjoins upon all his followers. Our divine Master himself has set an example to his followers of this self-consecration; for he said, “I must work the work of him that sent

me, while it is called to-day; the night cometh, when no man can work.” The wise king of Israel long before said, “whatsoever thy hand findeth thee to do, do it with thy might; for there is no wisdom, nor device, nor knowledge, in the grave whither thou goest.” Now, there are some of you, my brethren, that are in no way usefully employed for God and his church; you are not occupying your time, talents, and influence for God and your country as you ought; and you say, “Well, when I have settled my business, realized a competency, and have released myself from the burdens which now oppress me, then I intend to do this or that for the Lord:” and, long before that period arrives, you may be in eternity! Let me, then, impress upon you the importance of serving God, and redeeming some portion of time for the glory of Him who gave his Son to die for you. And be not afraid of doing too much; there are multitudes of people who do far too little. When the laborious Calvin was most energetic in the pulpit, in the study, and in the consistory, some brother said to him, “Calvin, you work too hard.” “What,” said he, “would you have the Master come and find me idle?” O, my friends, let it be our great anxiety to be so busily employed for God, that, should the Master come suddenly, we might say, “Lord, at thy bidding we leave the work we love, to live with thee for ever.” Happy that servant, who, when his Master cometh, shall be found so doing!

Our text, when it exhorts to watchfulness, implies, *secondly*, *constant expectation*. We know not when the Master cometh. You say to your servant, “On such a night I expect to return from my journey; do not go to rest, for the hour of my arrival is uncertain.” The servant watches; coach after coach arrives; he knows not how soon you may come, and therefore he has the house ready, the usual comforts prepared, and vigilantly awaits your return. This is the idea of the text, and it calls for *constant expectation* of the coming of the Lord. O, my brethren, I pray God that this feeling may be more present with us all, and

that we may be willing to die at our Master's summons! Thus Aaron was told to go up to mount Hor, take off his sacerdotal robes, and die: and he went up without a murmur. Thus Moses ascended Pisgah's height, and breathed out his spirit there, at the command of God. Thus Job waited all the days of his appointed time, till his change came. Thus the aged Simeon said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Thus the youthful Stephen cried, "Lord Jesus, into thy hands I commit my spirit." Thus the devoted Paul could say, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand"—"I am willing not only to suffer, but to die for his name's sake." This constant preparation for death, my brethren, is a blessed state of mind!

"If sin be pardon'd, I'm secure;  
 Death has no sting beside:  
 The law gave sin its damning power,  
 But Christ the ransom died."

Thus, my dear friends, have I opened to you the thoughts which this solemn providence, and this impressive subject, have suggested to my mind. But before I sit down I must distinctly address myself to different classes in this assembly.

First, I must address *the numerous parents of rising families that are now in the presence of God*. Our bereaved friends know too well that I deeply sympathize with them in the solemn providence which has taken away the delight of their eyes at a stroke, to suppose that what I address to other parents is intended to afflict their personal feelings. Let me, therefore, entreat you to remember that it is your first duty to seek after the spiritual welfare of your own children. Nothing can cause a greater anxiety to godly parents, when a child has been suddenly removed, than the inquiry, Was he prepared to go? And as the lives of our children are as frail as the life of our departed young friend, and may be removed as suddenly, I charge you, before God, that you make it a prayerful duty to talk individually and alone with your children, about their preparation for eternity. O,

their loss would be comparatively nothing to you, if you knew that they had gained heaven! But to lose them with the fearful apprehension that they have gone down to perdition, would be an affliction under which nothing but extraordinary grace could sustain you. I, therefore, solemnly entreat you to care for the spiritual welfare of your children. Remember that it should ever lie near your heart. You have nurtured them from infancy; educated them in childhood and youth; have introduced them into business; and now you anticipate their connexions, and talk of their settlement in life: but O realize their mortality! All these things were familiar with our young friend: she had a business, prospects, and a lover, and was anticipating her settlement, dreaming of long years of pleasure; but in an instant she went down to the chambers of the dead. O, then, my friends, do not make that a secondary which ought to be the first concern! Do not say, "When my children grow older, they will be more steady; they will be more prepared to listen." You know not what a night may bring forth; *this night* their souls may be required of them. Appeal, then, to your children; say to them, "You know that I love you, that I have sought your best interests, and have supplied you with all that parental affection could grant consistently with parental obligations: as you love me, then, take my advice, and seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Charge them, while they are yet young, to seek the Lord God of their fathers, that the angel of the covenant who hath guided and blessed you all your life long, may also bless them. Thus may this solemn providence create a concern in the minds of parents for the young people of their households, and let them become the interpreters of God's will in this awful providence speaking home to the heart.

*To the young people of this congregation* I most affectionately address myself. My dear young friends, it is obvious that a youthful healthy frame, sprightliness of disposition, and buoyancy of natural temper, form no security against the attacks of death. Our young friend attired her-

self last Sunday morning with her accustomed care, came down to the breakfast table with her accustomed cheerfulness, charged her sister to make haste, hurried to the post of duty in the adjoining school-room, took her place at the head of her class, found herself a little faint, went to the door, and there fell, and, as I believe, immediately expired. O, how little did she think, when in her chamber dressing that morning for the sanctuary, that she should return to it again no more! Let me entreat you, my dear friends, not to leave your chamber any morning without bowing the knee before God, lest peradventure you go not there again.

Let me speak to you, *ye teachers in the Sabbath-schools, and to the dear children of your care.* This is a most admonitory providence to you. God, by this awful visitation, has come into the midst of you, and exhorted you, with renewed emphasis, to work while it is called to-day. Do not, then, allow any subject to preclude from your attention the great object you should keep in view—the salvation of the souls of these children. It is well that they read the Bible; that their minds are stored with hymns, and catechisms, and texts of Scripture; but they must have a spiritual understanding, to make these truly beneficial to them. Let them, then, be impressed by your earnestness, your importunity, your tender and affectionate appeals; constrain them to feel that their teachers are in earnest about religion, and are determined, by the blessing of God, that they shall love religion. You, my dear children, who are in the class over which our departed young friend presided, are especially addressed by this providence. I hope she was faithful to you; that she directed you to many solemn passages of Scripture, and entreated you to love the Lord while you were young. Remember that she has gone to her account, and that soon you may have to follow her. How awful will be the meeting of teachers and scholars, pastors and people, at the bar of God! We have reason to pray that God would forgive our iniquities; that he would give us grace to serve him with newness of life; that henceforth we may

break off our sins by righteousness, and consecrate all our powers to his service.

My strength is exhausted, and I fear your patience may be wellnigh spent. Let, however, my text abide in all your hearts: if nothing else is remembered, recollect this—“Lest the Master, coming suddenly, find you sleeping.” May He, who can address not only the ear, but the heart, arouse your minds to duty, and speak to you in accents of peace; lest, ere long, you hear his voice, as in accents of thunder, saying, “Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity!” May God command his blessing! Amen and amen.

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#### THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

CHRISTIANITY affirms our future existence its postulate. It is not the revelation of the fact, but a description of its nature, and a provision for its beatification. And it is for him who impugns “the word of life,” still to bear the burden of his own immortality as he can! The only difference between him and his fellow travellers towards eternity is, that he has thrown away the torch and the staff, which the others acknowledge to enlighten and help them. The argument must rest with the infidel: he must prove that man is *not* immortal; for this is the obligation on any one who sets himself in defiance of general consent.

Now, whatever is, may still be; a body impelled into motion continues in motion: and the presumption is, that man, who at present exists, will always exist, unless the strongest reasons can be opposed. Is such a contrivance likely to perish? And if he continue to exist, should not his being, as it advances, become more grave? Extricated from its littleness of pursuit, and disciplined of its frivolity in taste, is not his immortality the pledge of a more solemn state of things? Can the *grub* of time be the *butterfly* of eternity?

Death will, however, be urged as the palpable extinction of the being. But no man will assert that then a single atom of the body is destroyed. The organic structure is altered; fibre and fluid are decomposed; the whole enters into new combinations, but not a particle is lost.

Why may not the same be true of the soul? It was held by the body; the body has been affected by mechanical causes which could not reach the soul; the soul has become disengaged. Many changes took place in that body through life, and yet the soul was the same. And to the last, amidst the wreck of its corporeal vehicle, how often does it triumph! I speak not of the hero, the martyr, the patriot who kisses the block, the chief who chants the death-song; but of one whose springs of life are shivered, and all his vigours spent. There a lambent fire plays, which no chill and damp of death can extinguish. There a might puts forth itself, victorious in that grasp, beneath which all things wither. And have we not witnessed the holy spectacle? the mind rising in majesty, while all its barriers were falling from around it! It is then greatest when it might be expected to yield; then freest when it might be expected to waver; then boldest when it might be expected to shrink! "Death is thus a spontaneous act, a more ardent prayer of the mind."\* Are not, then, the probabilities strongly in favour of the soul's independence and indestructibility? And should a desire be felt to confuse the properties of matter and spirit, of which the human being, in his present state, is compounded, we shall again remit the disputant to the common sense of mankind. All allow them to be as different things, as differing and inconvertible properties can prove them. And whatever physiological hardihood has dared, we wait with perfect composure for it to prove that man is a mere machine; that intellect is the result of organization and a modification of matter, most subtilized and alternated; that thought is an effect of refined substance and arrangement, even though it will allow, that no more of grossness enters into its nature than into the effluvia of a rose, and the tone of a vibration. And if soul and body be such foreign essences, how can it be supposed that they are subject in themselves to the same accidents, or perish by the same fates?

And on the supposition that there is no

\* De Stael.

immortality for man, let the skeptic attempt to vindicate the character of his God. It cannot be denied that it is the fervid aspiration of our nature, that the cessation of being is regarded by us as the greatest possible infliction, and that each yearning of our bosom disposes us to "give all that we have for our life." Something of this feeling, we admit, may have been benevolently given, though death were the last scene of all, as a precautionary instinct, that we might prize and guard so important a deposit. But this is a nobler tending of our being. It cannot bear that its garner of affections, and its treasure of purest delights, shall, in a moment, be crushed. It cannot endure that its high studies, and wonderful acquirements, shall be instantaneously blotted into night. It cannot brook the sudden transition from the intellectual soul into the sleepless clod. And yet the theist must conceive that the Deity has raised these hopes to crush them, and taught men to ascend a mount, whence they might desery the boundless prospect, that they might die on that mount. And thus represented cruel to man, he is described as equally unjust to himself. His creatures, made capable of understanding him, are perplexed with his conduct, but confide in its destined explanation. They have only seen "a part of Him." They have heard but a passage of an infinite history, and beheld but a scene of the eternal drama. They "wait the great teacher—Death, and God adore." But while their spirits are wrapt in anxiety, they perish in the suspense! Ready to burst into the song of wonder, love, and praise, their lips are sealed in endless silence!

Let, then, the unbeliever consider his case. He is hastening to judgment! He will soon enter into eternity. His rejection of Christianity does not, in the slightest degree, alter these laws of his being. For him there is no pause, no choice. He is borne resistlessly forward: however his spirit may recoil, his step cannot. Each moment, each pulse, testifies his progress. He is always accountable, and shall live always.—*Rev. R. W. Hamilton.*

## SERMON VIII.

THE INFLUENCE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.\*

BY THE RT. REV. JOHN JEBB,

LATE BISHOP OF LIMERICK.

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*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized unto Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? therefore, we are buried with him by baptism, into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead, by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.—Rom. vi. 3, 4.*

“If we have been planted together in the likeness of Christ’s death,” says the apostle, “we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body; but yield yourselves unto God, as them that are alive from the dead. Reckon yourselves to be dead, indeed, unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. For then, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye shall have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”

Such is the language which the church has adopted from Saint Paul: and, by the lips of her ministers, has this day solemnly delivered to her children. Language peculiarly accordant with the spirit and design of this great commemorative festival. For, it were in vain to celebrate the death and resurrection of our blessed Lord, unless it be our serious purpose to show forth that death, and to imitate that resurrection, in the whole tenor of our lives and conversation.

It is usual indeed, on this day, to expatiate on the blessed hope of immortality. But is there not a more immediate concern, which demands our more immediate thought and care? For how could the most absolute assurance of immortality be a source of real comfort, un-

\* Preached on Easter Sunday.

less to us the day at least have dawned, and the day-spring have arisen in our hearts? Christ, indeed, has died for our offences, and risen for our justification. But to us, it will be only aggravated condemnation that Christ has died, except we be made conformable to his death. To us, it will be no more than accumulated woe that Christ has risen, except in spirit and affection we also be risen with Christ. If, therefore, we would know the power of his resurrection, we must first experience the fellowship of his sufferings; and if, at the last, we would inherit his victorious kingdom, we must not, merely through the chinks and crevices of a worldly life, amuse our fancy with the dim perspective of a reversionary heaven. It must, on the contrary, be our great aim and purpose, by the imitation, and through the grace of our blessed Lord, in self-denial, in self-conquest, in self-possession, in the love of high and heavenly objects, and in the attainment of pure and holy dispositions, to possess an inward, and a present heaven; the pledge, at once, and foretaste of that eternal rest which remaineth to the people of God.

This doctrine is abundantly confirmed by the sound and venerable words of our church liturgy. In the collect for the vigil of this holy day, we are taught to implore, “that, as we were baptized into the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, so,

by continual mortifying our evil and corrupt affections, we may be buried with him." In the ordinance of baptism, we "humbly beseech our most merciful Father, to grant, that we, being dead unto sin, and living unto righteousness; and being buried with Christ in his death, may crucify the old man, and utterly abolish the whole body of sin." In the exhortation, at the close of the same office we are reminded, "that baptism doth represent unto us our profession, which is, to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto him; that, as he died, and rose again for us, so should we, who have been baptized, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness, continually mortifying every evil and corrupt affection, and daily proceeding, in all virtue and godliness of living." And, as the summary of this great truth, we are briefly instructed, in the church catechism, that "the inward and spiritual grace of baptism, is a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness."

But why do I thus revert to the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, to those obvious and familiar truths, which from earliest infancy have been imprinted on our memory, and which, in all reason, should be no less deeply imprinted on our conscience and our hearts? To yourselves, my brethren, I would freely appeal, in full assurance of a candid and ingenuous reply. Are these first principles, these obvious and familiar truths, thus deeply imprinted in your memory, thus indelibly engraven on your conscience, thus vitally operative in your hearts? If they be, no apology is needful for their introduction. The repetition of what we love and value is never painful. But if, indeed, by the cares of this world, and by the deceitfulness of riches, and by the desire of other things, the impression of these great truths be obliterated or impaired, (and whether they be not so obliterated or impaired, let your own consciousness bear testimony,) then assuredly, my brethren, it is neither superfluous nor unseasonable;—it is, on the contrary, our indispensable and immediate duty in this holy place, and at this holy season, to consider the breadth,

and length, and depth, and height of that solemn vow, promise, and profession, which we have all made in our baptism; which most of us have repeatedly sealed and ratified, in the presence of men and angels; every past infringement of which, we are this day called upon to acknowledge and bewail at the foot of our Redeemer's altar; and every requisition of which we are this day invited, through the divine grace, and heavenly benediction, henceforth and for ever to fulfil; by the solemn dedication of ourselves, our souls, and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto God.

"Know ye not," says the apostle, "that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death?" This engagement, it must not be concealed, requires many things, which, in this world, are habitually disregarded, if not systematically opposed; crucifixion of the flesh, mortification of the body, discipline of the mind, subjugation of inordinate affections, extinction of vain desires, calm forbearance under provocation, patient endurance of contradiction, and a constant watchfulness against excess, even in the most innocent propensities of our nature. These are truly difficulties. But it is not by shrinking from difficulties, that we shall become proficient in any valuable attainment; and least of all, in the attainment, beyond exception or competition, the most valuable and important, that service of God, which is perfect freedom. Never, in any one of his most gracious and attractive words, did our blessed Lord extenuate or evade the first impediments of a Christian life and conversation. Poverty of spirit, penitential sorrow, spiritual hunger and thirst, a strait gate, a narrow way, a yoke, a burden, a cross, a warfare, the amputation of a right hand, the excision of a right eye, these he continually enjoined upon his disciples, as indispensable prerequisites to purity of heart, to peacefulness of spirit, to the safe enjoyment of this present world, and to the final blessedness of that inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, which fadeth not away; now, indeed, reserved in heaven,

but gloriously to be revealed in the last time.

Difficulties therefore, in religion, and especially in the commencement of religion, we must unreservedly acknowledge. Christ himself has announced them, has enjoined them. And who shall presume to contravene his declarations, to abrogate his laws? It is, however, an important truth, that the difficulties which men experience are, for the most part, and in their least surmountable height, difficulties of human manufacture. Nature is rarely left to her own process. How frequently are the movements of Providence counteracted, and the Spirit of God resisted, by the conventional usages, the unexamined maxims, and the unsuspected pleasures of a thoughtless and contaminating world? I speak not of the notoriously profligate and openly profane. But how commonly, in families devoted neither to extravagance nor dissipation, are the first affecting inquiries of children silenced, and their earliest feelings of devotion chilled, by the cold, repulsive, intimidating answers of parents, who abstain from all appearance of enthusiasm, with far more trembling solicitude than they abstain from all appearance of evil? And by the grave and prudent of this world how carefully in after-life are all graces, all accomplishments, all attainments of knowledge, all mysteries of wisdom instilled, infused, inculcated, with the sole exception of the one supreme imperishable grace, and accomplishment, and knowledge, and wisdom, of an immortal and accountable being? Thus it is, that with respect to the greatest of all concerns, the ductile season of childhood, and the impressible period of youth, are suffered to pass away unemployed and unimproved. For merely human purposes indeed, inferior faculties are cultivated and cherished. But the greatest faculty of all is utterly neglected and abandoned; that faculty, to which all the rest should be instrumental and subservient; that faculty, which stamps immortality upon our nature; the faculty of loving and imitating our Saviour and our God. In such a world, so trained, and so disciplined, it would be miraculous, if

prejudices, if principles, if propensities, if tastes, if habits unfriendly to seriousness, and uncongenial to religion, were not interwoven with the very fibres of society. And thus interwoven, who does not feel, that compared with their disentanglement and eradication, the intrinsic hardships of a Christian course are light and insignificant? Let not, therefore, the crimes and follies of mankind be visited upon the holy cause of Christianity. Let not the diseases of the patient be assumed as an argument against obedience to the physician. Let not the wanderings of the sheep be alleged to prove the cruelty of the great Shepherd, who, by all means, would restore them to his pasture and his fold.

The difficulty of religion must be traced to something in ourselves. It must especially be traced to the neglect or the mismanagement of early religious institution. If the divine grace of baptism were duly cherished and protected on the part of Christian parents, then assuredly Christ's yoke would be easy, and his burden light, to many of the rising generation. Self-denial, self-discipline, self-conquest, would then be habitually cherished, and cheerfully embraced, as the means, not only of future blessedness, but of present peace. And in keeping the very hardest of Christ's sayings, then would there be reaped a rich reward; the reward of an approving conscience, of home-felt serenity, of a free and filial access unto God. Yes, my brethren, if your children were formed by mild parental discipline, and nurtured by religious education, and invigorated by the influence of steady, consistent, undeviating good example; if your domestic circles were made what God and nature intended them to be, domestic sanctuaries consecrated by cheerful unaffected piety, by solid and substantial goodness, by generous and manly sentiment, by peace, and harmony, and mutual good will; if, in the natural and easy flow of conversation, the deep truths of Christianity were familiarized and endeared; not magisterially imposed as a task, not controversially debated as a system, but introduced with unstudied gracefulness, and recom-

mended at once to the taste, the judgment, and the affections, by a happy temperament of elegance, good sense, and cordiality; if youth were thus early and imperceptibly instituted in the principles of happiness and virtue, drawn rather by example than by precept, rather by experience than reflection, to regard our holy religion, not as a theory, but as a sentiment, not as the austere and gloomy prohibittess of pleasure, but as a salient well-spring of the most diversified, the most refined, the most intellectual, the most inexhaustible enjoyment; then, truly, many hardships would be mitigated, many obstacles surmounted, many impediments removed. Then to crucify the flesh with its affections and desires, to be dead to all the vanities of this wicked world, to imitate the self-denying, suffering Son of God, would be accounted, not a wearisome burden, but an inestimable privilege. Then would your children preserve the grace of baptism pure and undefiled, increasing in wisdom as in stature, and in favour with God and man. Then would your sons grow up as the young plants; your daughters as the polished corners of the temple. Then, in the deepest and most spiritual sense of the word, there would be no decay, no leading into captivity, and no complaining in our streets. Happy are the people who are in such a case! Yea, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God!

Truly blessed are the people thus delivered from the bondage of corruption: whose advancement in religion is thus daily and hourly progressive; who are thus dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. To them, this day is, in reality, a joyful festival; uniting the calm remembrance of the past with the most glorious anticipations of the future; and affording the comfortable assurance, that as their life is now hid with Christ in God, so when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall they also appear with him in glory.

But shall we confine the salutary influence of this great festival to those who have inviolably kept their baptismal covenant? Shall we confine it, even to those

who have long been established in the ways of holiness and virtue? God forbid!—For then how few could comfortably approach the table of the Lord! Such was not the spirit or the practice of the ancient church, in times even of her strictest discipline. At Easter, the newly baptized, indeed, were presented, in the white robe of innocence, to the congregation of the faithful. But the penitent also were at Easter restored to their forfeited station in the church, and readmitted to the communion of the sacred mysteries. And, at this day, what is the cheering invitation of the church? You will hear it presently from the altar; hear it also, now from the pulpit. “Ye that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbours; and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways,—draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament to your comfort, and make your humble confession to Almighty God.”

This is our encouragement, a sober, practical encouragement, to approach the mercy-seat of heaven. Let us not, however, deceive our own souls. No superficial sorrow for the past, no half-hearted resolutions for the future, can enable us worthily to approach that holy table. The penitence which God requires, and which alone he will acknowledge and receive, must be deep, earnest, universal, and morally efficacious. It must be the commencement of holy desires, good counsels, and just works. It must be followed and attested, by a thirst after spiritual improvement, by a pursuit of high and heavenly objects, and by a proficiency in all those Christian graces, which constitute, and which adorn the Christian character and spirit.

But who, it may be said, is sufficient for these things? Truly, my brethren, if Scripture were silent on the subject, reason, and conscience, and experience, would loudly testify, that we are altogether insufficient of ourselves. But Christianity enables us to add, that our sufficiency is of God. From the diversified and most instructive annals of human

nature, in all times, and under all dispensations, it is, indeed, unquestionable, that we should vainly attempt, by our own mere strength, to resist the sway of a single bad habit, the force of a single inordinate desire, the incursion of a single wrong passion. As well, in truth, might we plant our foot upon the shore, and say unto the whelming ocean, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." For to still the raging of the sea, and the madness of the human heart, are alike the incommunicable prerogative of God alone. With man, indeed, these things are impossible; but with God, all things are possible. He can enable us to resist all evil; he can enable us to fulfil all good. By the working of his mighty Spirit, we may be planted together in the likeness of Christ's death. By the working of the same Spirit, we may be planted together in the likeness of his resurrection.

"Planted together in the likeness of Christ's death: planted in the likeness of his resurrection." These remarkable words derive their best and only adequate interpretation, from the language of our blessed Lord himself. "I am the vine, ye are the branches. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit. For without me, ye can do nothing." This is the distinctive feature of Christianity. We are to imitate our Saviour Christ, indeed, and to be made like unto him. But the imitation of Christ intrinsically differs from the imitation of a mere mortal. Would we resemble a wise and virtuous fellow creature? He cannot alter our hearts and minds; we must labour to produce the resemblance for ourselves. Would we resemble our Lord Jesus Christ? Without him we can do nothing. But by his own omnipotent energy, he will accomplish our desire. In the nature, the words, the actions, the demeanour and deportment of incarnate Godhead, there dwells an assimilative power, which he who ever liveth to make interces-

sion for us, is abundantly able and willing to apply. Therefore, if we truly and earnestly desire to be made conformable to his life, and death, and resurrection; and if from this desire we contemplate with the mental eye of faith, his whole adorable character; in thus contemplating, we shall become what we behold. We shall acquire, not a likeness, but a community of nature. We shall become partakers of that mind which is in Christ Jesus, as really as the branches derive their vital sap and nutriment from the parent vine. Then we shall dwell in Christ, and Christ in us; we shall be one with Christ, and Christ with us. With him we shall crucify the flesh. With him we shall overcome the world. We shall be planted together in the likeness of his death. We shall be planted together in the likeness of his resurrection. And like as Christ was raised from the dead, by the glory of the Father, even so we also shall walk in newness of life.

This is the great practical object of our holy faith. "In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision availeth any thing, but a new creature." "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." But what is this newness of life? What is this new creature? Saint Paul acquaints us, that "the new man is God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works;" and that, "after God, he is created in righteousness, and true holiness." And what is the source of this blessed renovation? "We are not under the law," says the same apostle, "but under grace." That is, we are under a dispensation which not merely conveys the knowledge of our duty, but which graciously imparts the power of performance. As many as receive the eternal and incarnate Word, to them giveth he power to become the sons of God; even to them who believe on his name. And how may we ascertain our title to this character? By obeying, from the heart, that form of doctrine which hath been delivered to us; by feeling a cordial and affectionate persua-

sion of Christ's nature and office, as our friend, our benefactor, our instructor, our priest, our prophet, our king, and our God; and from that persuasion, by habitually resorting to him, on every emergency, great and small, for guidance, for strength, for support, for confirmation, in the ways of God's laws, and in the works of his commandments. Thus proceeding, and the fault will be entirely our own if we do not thus proceed, we shall be enabled to soar beyond the pitch of our natural powers. We shall prohibit sin from reigning in our mortal body. We shall no longer yield our members instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; of iniquity unto iniquity. We shall yield ourselves unto God, as them which are alive from the dead. We shall yield our members instruments of righteousness unto God. We shall be made free from sin. We shall become servants of righteousness.

And now, my brethren, suffer, I entreat you, a few parting words of exhortation. By assembling here this day, you declare yourselves Christians; and many of you intend to seal this profession by the most solemn attestation which it is in the power of man to give. In this discourse, it has been my earnest wish to embody, and present before you the vital principle of that Christianity which you believe and profess; a principle, without which the most correct belief, and the most plausible profession, is but as sounding brass, or as a tinkling cymbal. And I would now beseech you unreservedly to give your whole hearts and minds to that inward spirit of religion, which, in our blessed Saviour's own sense, is beyond all imaginable comparison, **THE ONE THING NEEDFUL**. If you have, to this day, lived content with outward acts, and occasional observances, let there be, henceforward, an end of your delusion. Christianity must live in your hearts, before it can be efficacious in your lives. You must delight to cultivate religion in your closets, or it will be to little purpose that you shall appear to honour religion in the churches. Christianity must live in your

hearts, in order that it may influence the whole of your external conduct. And it is only so far as Christianity does actually live in your hearts, and pervade and animate your whole lives and conversation, that you can either have comfort in the hour of death, or capacity for a blessed eternity.

Apply your hearts then, my brethren, this day, to this truest and only wisdom. And before you leave the house of God, ask of him who worketh in you, of his own good pleasure, both to will and to do, that even those among you who have hitherto been least mindful of your true happiness, may, from henceforth, be wise unto salvation. God, who heareth the young ravens that cry, delighteth to be implored for such substantial blessings. He hath instituted this holy solemnity, for the express purpose that it might awaken this very solicitude. Feel, therefore, my brethren, as you ought to feel; and give vent to your feelings at the footstool of your Redeemer's table. Who, that is here present, can promise himself another return of this festival? This thought may well strike terror into every negligent mind. But to him who from this day shall begin to live for God and for eternity, what loss can it imply, what terror can it bring? Let our life be righteous, and death will be our gain. Let the grace of God reign in our hearts, and we shall be equally fitted for both worlds; fitted on earth to enjoy the blessings, and to do the will of our heavenly Father; but especially fitted for that great change, which nothing can render supportable but a spiritual conformity to the death, and a spiritual participation in the resurrection, of our blessed Lord. This conformity, and this participation, if we are not here in vain, we are here assembled to implore. And if we implore it faithfully, we may entertain a hope, not less rational than fervid, that "Almighty God, who, by his special grace preventing us, doth put into our minds good desires, will, by his continual help, enable us to bring the same to good effect, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

## SERMON IX.

PAUL'S REASONING BEFORE FELIX.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM AULD.

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*“And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”—Acts xxiv. 24, 25.*

THE office of the Christian ministry cannot be magnified too highly. It excels every other pursuit of this busy world—in *honour* as far as heaven rises above the earth—in *importance* as far as eternity stretches beyond time—and in the *awfulness of its responsibility* beyond the tongue of man to tell, or the heart of man to conceive. If, therefore, we, the ministers of religion, speak to you with authority, proclaiming with all faithfulness the blessings of the gospel, or thundering forth all the terrors of the law, we entreat you to bear with us; for to act otherwise, would be dangerous to you, dishonouring to God, and fatal to ourselves; and we be unto us if we speak not the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. And, in such a style of preaching, we are but imitating the example of Christ, the head of the church—of all the prophets that went before him, and of all the apostles that followed after. Look to the apostle in the case before us!—his body was in chains, but his spirit was free; though he stood at the bar of a tyrant that could dispense life or death at pleasure, yet he did not flatter, or fawn, or seek his favour, but, rising above the smiles or the frowns of man, he boldly pointed out his sins, warning him of his danger; and, as an humble advocate of the cross of Christ, he directed him along that road to the city of refuge, which the mightiest prince, as well as the meanest beggar, alike must take. “He spake,” it is said, “of the faith in Christ,” and

he “reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come;” and such was the impression produced by all this, that, it is added, “Felix trembled, and said, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”

There are three things suggested by these words, which we shall endeavour to bring before you. *First*, THE MANNER IN WHICH PAUL PREACHED; *second*, THE TOPICS ON WHICH HE PREACHED; and *third*, THE EFFECT WHICH HIS PREACHING ON THE PRESENT OCCASION PRODUCED.

I. Let us consider THE MANNER OR THE STYLE OF PAUL'S PREACHING ON THE PRESENT OCCASION.

He did not utter dogmatic assertions; what he advanced he supported by argument. He did not deal in vague declamation; he did not indulge in airy speculations which might please, but not profit; he did not call to his aid the artifices of rhetoric, in order to produce effect; nor did he labour to adorn his discourse with the embellishments of a gaudy eloquence, which, like the meteor's flash, might dazzle for a moment, but leave behind not a ray of light or of heat; he did not work up some pathetic story, or breathe forth the glowing descriptions of fancy, to touch the tender passions of the heart. No. His was a nobler aim than that of the actor, merely to please the ear, or draw tears from the eye. “He reasoned,” he addressed man as a rational being; and his great object was to en-

lighten the mind and carry conviction to the judgment. True it is that until the heart be moved, no good can be done; and we grant that the feelings and affections of the inner man do occupy a prominent place in the religion that is from above. But as in nature, so also it is in grace—*light* must first be created. It would be like tracing figures on the sand, to be effaced by the returning wave, if we excited the feelings of the heart without having beforehand imparted knowledge to the head. That devotion which is founded on ignorance will be superstition, and may answer well enough the selfish purposes of priestcraft; but it can never be called a “reasonable service,” nor will it be accepted by Him who forbiddeth “the halt, the maimed, and the *blind*, to be offered in sacrifice.” Accordingly, the apostle laboured to bring forward the principles of Christianity—to establish its facts—to defend its doctrines—to explain its truths, and to clear up its evidences, whilst all his “reasonings” on these topics he made to bear on the judgment. Knowing that if the judgment were once convinced, then, but not till then, the conscience might be aroused, and the heart taken possession of.

*He reasoned.* But “what,” asks the infidel, “is there in the Christian religion to reason about? It is the religion of babes, not of men. It fits the dark ages that are bygone, but not the present.” In reply to such an accuser, we would say, Have you the presumption thus to decide on a religion that you have never examined, or examined, like the spy, solely with a view to find out faults? True our religion is fitted for babes; and it is its greatest glory that a “wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein.” But this is also as true, that it affords scope for the exercise of the loftiest intellect, and among its disciples it tells of a Locke, a Newton, and a Bacon, who paused in the midst of their inquiries to exclaim, “O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!” And if but comparatively few of the great and the learned of this world have hitherto bowed before the cross of

Christ, it is just because the lessons of the gospel are too simple, and its precepts too pure for the pride of their unrenewed hearts. And on what occasion, we would ask, did ever our holy Christianity shrink back from the scrutinizing glance of this world’s philosophy? Every page of history can attest how it has always courted inquiry: it asks nothing but justice; it seeks no indulgence; it craves no mercy. Every other religion retires at the approach of light; but just as the day of science and of art draws nearer its meridian effulgence, the Christian temple appears the stronger in its foundations, and the more majestic in its structure. And the farther you enter into its interior, and the more closely, by the torch of reason, you examine its altar, its divinity, its sacrifice, and its worship, the more clearly will you discover inscribed on all around you, “The hand that made us is divine!” Well, then, might the apostle, as he went about Sion, and showed its bulwarks to the infidel king, exert all the reasoning powers of his highly gifted mind; well might he call into exercise his rich and varied stores of Greek and Jewish learning; the occasion befitted archangel better than man.

*He reasoned.* This teaches us that he did not lay aside the *means*. He did not, like some, leave the individual, as the saying is, “in the hands of God,” and look on as if he had nothing more to do till “the period of divine visitation.” On the contrary he bent his whole soul to produce conviction and conversion in the mind of Felix, with as much earnestness as if all depended on himself—fully aware that, as in nature, so also in grace, nothing can be done without labour; and the more labour we bestow, the more reason will we have to hope for the divine blessing. If then, my hearers, there is any over whose wanderings you mourn, it will not be enough merely to *wish* their peace; it will not be sufficient merely to *pray*, even night and day, for the divine mercy on their behalf; to your prayers you must add your exertions, and your duty will but be half done till you meet them face to face, and “*reason*” with them on those things that concern their

eternal peace. You must set before them the value of the soul—the tender mercy of the Father—the all-importance of the Redeemer's salvation; you must press on their minds the evil of sin—the vanities of time—the unsatisfactoriness of the world—the awfulness of a judgment-day, and the dread realities of a coming eternity; in short, you must use all the arguments that Scripture and reason can suggest, and with all the love, and all the faithfulness, and all the prudence in your power, urge these arguments on them, as motives to seek the Lord ere it be too late. It is only by acting thus that your prayers for your friends will be heard; and in no other way will you be able to shake your garments free from their blood. So acted Paul when he stood before Felix. Such was the style of Paul's preaching.

II. Let us now consider WHAT WERE THE TOPICS ON WHICH HE THUS PREACHED.

These topics are two—*faith* and *practice*; and what God hath joined together, let no man put asunder. Faith is here put first, and practice last, and justly, for faith is the only basis on which true practice can stand; it is the only spring from which pure, heavenly, spiritual morality can flow.

First, "*he spake concerning the faith in Christ*"—that is, the Christian faith, or the gospel scheme, of which Christ is at once both the author and the subject. Man, he would tell him, is guilty of having violated the law. In consequence of this violation, he has brought down upon himself the sentence of death—the death of the body, the death of the soul, and the death of both for ever. Vain would it be (he would remind him) to rely for deliverance on the general mercy of God, and vainer still to build a hope of pardon on his repentance for the past, or his amendment for the future. The security of the divine government—the happiness of the world at large—the faithfulness, justice, and even goodness of God, call aloud for the punishment of the transgressor. So great is this necessity, that unless a substitute can be found possessing a life of his own to offer, almighty power to sustain the burden of a

world's guilt, and infinite dignity to give to his sufferings a requisite value and efficacy; unless, we say, such a substitute can be found, there is no alternative but that man must bear the doom his guilt has merited. But where can *such* a substitute be found? Search among the fallen race of Adam, but none such is there; search among the sons of the mighty around the throne above, but none such is there; search the wide universe, but you will find no *created* being in heaven, or in earth, or under the earth, able to open "the book of salvation with the seven seals." But "weep not," says the gospel, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed!" "God so loved the world, as to send his only begotten Son, that in his life we might have an example, by his death a sacrifice for sin, and by his ascension all power might be obtained to bestow blessings on our head." And, now that our Redeemer liveth, there is in his fulness a rich supply of all things necessary for our welfare in this world, and in that which is to come; and the blessings of his grace are free to men of every age, and character, and condition—even to the chief of sinners; and, in order to their enjoyment, we are called only to believe in his name—only to trust in his word, for the fulfilment of his promise—only to look up to him, with reliance on his power and faithfulness, for mercy to pardon, and grace to help us, in every time of need. Such is an outline of "the faith in Christ," concerning which the apostle spake; and if we are anxious about the welfare of a single soul, let us remember that nothing but this blessed gospel can ever prove "the power of God unto salvation." It is an important fact—too important to be here passed over—that, for many long years, the Moravian missionaries had laboured in Greenland, but all to no purpose. They began by instructing the ignorant natives in the principles of *natural* religion—the existence of God—the creation of the world—the government of all things by a providence; but no success attended their efforts. All was vain till they came to speak of Jesus: then their attention was arrested, and the first tear was seen to trickle down their

cheeks; and then, for the first time, their hearts, which before were cold as the snows on which they trod, were warmed with the rays of divine love; and, at the sight of a crucified Redeemer, there then arose, amidst the icy mountains of Greenland, to the throne of the eternal, the song of "Moses and the Lamb." Yes, Christ crucified is the power of God unto salvation!

But as the sick man will never send for the physician till he is aware of his danger, so the sinner will never betake himself to the covert of redeeming blood, till he become sensible of his lost and sinful condition. The apostle, therefore, not only preached the gospel; he also proclaimed the law. He conducted Felix, if I may so speak, along the foot of Sinai, that after having heard the thunders of a broken law, he might welcome with greater gladness the peace-speaking voice of Calvary.

"*He reasoned,*" it is said, "*of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.*" "Righteousness," you know, consists in the observance of what man owes to man. No topic could be more appropriate on the present occasion, for Felix was notoriously cruel, and unjust, and oppressive in his government—to such a degree, that, at the complaint of the Jewish nation, he was recalled to Rome, where, with difficulty, he escaped a sentence of perpetual banishment. No doubt the apostle would lay before him those duties that are incumbent on rulers. A lofty station in society, he would tell him, does not tolerate those vices that religion condemns, nor does it dispense with those duties that religion requires in the humblest sphere of life—that, though raised above his fellow men, yet he that wears a crown, is but the servant of the Lord of Hosts, whose laws he is bound to obey, and whose character, as the world's governor, he is bound to imitate—that the prince is not exalted to a throne, nor does he get his exchequer filled by the hard-wrought industry of his subjects, merely for the gratification of his ambition, or vanity, or lust, but for the welfare of the community, that he may be a "praise to the good, and a ter-

ror to those that do evil!"—that the blessings or the deep-drawn curses of a nation will fall on its ruler's head, according as he acts the father or the tyrant of his people; and, in fine, he would warn him, that though a nation's curse should never visit him on the earth—though he should live and die amid the praises of his flattering courtiers—yet, when he came to resign his crown to God, who gave it then there would be a reckoning according to his deeds.

But were Paul in the midst of us—though he would find no kings, yet there are many with whom, and in like manner, he would "reason of righteousness." Most of us are engaged in the commercial pursuits of life, and in all our bargains we are called to be just—in all our engagements to be faithful—and in all our dealings to do to others as we would have them to do to us. Now, is there any who cannot open his account-books—who cannot meet in the face those with whom he is connected in business—who cannot lay his hand on his conscience, without being reminded that he acts otherwise? Then to such we would say, You call yourself a Christian, but to this name you have no title; for he that taketh undue advantage over his neighbour is destitute of love; and it is written, "Who-soever loveth not his brother is not of God." Nor will it in the least lessen your guilt, to plead that these practices are common in the course of trade, and that without them it would be impossible for business to be carried on; for, however lightly they may be thought of by men, they are all loudly condemned in the Word of God—which commands us to "do justly, and love mercy." And aware of this, as you must be, how can you dare to supplicate the divine blessing on your unjust gains? or what peace of mind can you expect in their enjoyment? Perhaps on this point, however, you are easy, and think that all is safe, because no human eye is upon you; but have you forgotten that all your ways are manifest before that God with whom you have to do, and in the presence of that conscience that, ere long, will speak out? And though here you may live a life of envied

prosperity, yet hereafter you cannot escape what is written against those who make the "shekel great and the ephah small, and falsify balances by deceit."

But, in reasoning of "righteousness," we may take a wider range than this. We are all members of the great family of man; and our poor brethren we are bound to relieve, the ignorant to instruct, the wretched to comfort, the benighted to save. And is there any who, from his abundant table, can spare nothing for the starving family in his neighbourhood? Is there any who can be arrayed in all the fineries of fashionable dress, and yet have no compassion on the poor old man that passes the window shivering in the blast? Is there any who can sit by the blazing fireside, and rest on a bed of down, and yet drive from his gate, in the dark and stormy night, the houseless wanderer? Is there any who can come up to the house of God on the peaceful Sabbath morning, and yet, when reminded of those on whom no Sabbath dawns, and to whom no sanctuary opens its gates, refuse to send the Bible and the missionary to cheer, and to instruct, and to save? With such we would reason; and we would say to them, You are deaf to the voice of humanity, as well as to the voice of God. You show no mercy to your fellow men, and how can you expect, since Scripture forbids it, mercy at the hands of your Maker! You seem, too, to have forgotten that all your goods, temporal or spiritual, are but a *loan* intrusted to you, not for your benefit merely, but for the benefit of the human race. And though this truth may be neglected, nay, though it may be despised on the earth, yet it will be acted on at the day of judgment; and then it will be found, that he only who has "visited the sick, clad the naked, taken the stranger to his house, given his bread to the hungry, and a cup of water to the thirsty," shall receive the welcome, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

There are, however, closer and more sacred relationships of life, to which in like manner we may apply the rule of righteousness—I mean *the domestic*; and, passing over all other members of a fami-

ly, I would address *parents*, who of all the rest have the most solemn duties to perform. Parents, you have brought into the world beings that will be happy or miserable for ever; and, whilst you educate them for this world, affection, religion, and your baptismal vow, call on you not to forget their education for the next. And do we address any who are deaf to this call? We do not mean those who, by their idleness and intemperance, leave their children unfed, unclad, and uneducated; alas! these are seldom to be found within the reach of a preacher's voice: it is those we mean who are carefully training up their children in those habits of diligence, and regularity, and economy, which are necessary to fit them for the life which now is, but who never once direct their attention to the life which is to come; in whose dwellings the voice of prayer and the melody of psalms are never heard, and who suffer their children to grow up as if they had no God to serve, and no soul to save. With such, and we fear their number is by no means small in our Sabbath assemblies, we are loudly called to reason of righteousness. Your offspring, let it never be forgotten, are committed to your care to be educated for God, and trained up for immortality. You condemn the poor being that neglects the temporal well-being of his family: he has, indeed, "denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel;" but what name, appropriate enough, do you reserve for yourselves? The poor man you thus reprobate—what has he done? Why, he has only starved the body of his child; he has only murdered the body of his child, and perhaps brought that body to an untimely grave. But what have you done? You have starved the immortal *part*, you have murdered the precious soul; and, O! the first death is nothing in comparison of the second, where all is weeping and wailing, and "no more any sacrifice for sin for ever!" O! I beseech you to reflect! How will you be able to leave behind you in the hour of death your unrenewed and un-sanctified charge? how will you be able to gaze on their despair, when you meet them at the place of judgment? and of

all in outer wo, you will flee farthest from the curses of your children, you will seek the darkest corner of hell, and there you will drink the deepest agony; and as the cursed pass by they will point the finger, and say, "Yonder is a murderer—a parent who murdered his child—a murderer of its soul!"

But the second class of duties concerning which the apostle reasoned, was "*temperance*," or the right government of the passions and the appetites: and whilst righteousness respects those duties we owe to others, temperance has reference to those duties we owe to ourselves. Nor was this topic less appropriate than the former; for Felix not only was unjust in his government, but also addicted to sensuality and lust; and the woman called "his wife" was one whose husband was still living, and whom Felix had seduced from her conjugal allegiance. No doubt the apostle would remind him that the "pure in heart alone can see God," that nothing that defileth or worketh abomination shall stand in the presence of the Eternal. Like John the Baptist, when before Herod on a similar occasion, he would warn him that it was not lawful to have another's wife; and that "because of these things came the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."

But though, in the present audience, there be none chargeable with offences of this sort, yet there are many other crimes common amongst us, respecting which the preacher is often called to reason of "*temperance*." Is it not a fact, that there are some that can come up to the house of God on the peaceful Sabbath morning, scarcely recovered from the debauchery of the Saturday evening, and who have the courage to take into their lips that holy name which a few hours before they profaned in their songs of midnight revelry! Yes; these are still, in many instances, called Christians; they find little difficulty in getting their children baptized, and, awful profanation! they are allowed to take into their hands the bread and the wine of the holy sacrament. With such we would reason, and with a kindly but warning voice we

would tell them, that of all the vices in this wicked world there is none so small in its beginning, so gradual and unperceived in its progress, yet so destructive in its consequences. Not only does it ruin the health, ruin the industry, ruin the fortune, ruin the character, ruin our peace, ruin our family, but what is far worse, it weakens the memory, it darkens the mind, it hardens the heart, it stupifies the conscience, it unfits for religious duties, it makes its poor victim regardless about the law of God and the opinion of men, it makes him unconcerned how he lives, and reckless how he dies. Say not, if we are speaking to any such, that it is but on rare occasions you go to excess. So said many whose prospects were once fair as yours. Once we regarded them as travellers to Zion; but now we weep to see how, step by step, they have thrown aside all religion and all decency, and now go about forsaken of men, and, as it were, accursed of God; go about like fallen angels that once were glorious, and are left as beacons amid the desolation of the waters, to warn us of those rocks on which they have made shipwreck. Little may this vice be condemned among men, and the poor wretch as he staggers along the street may excite the laughter rather than the pity of the passers by; but it is ranked amid the vilest vices that darken the page of Scripture; and on the last page of revelation, among the last sayings of the last prophet, just as he was leaving the earth, he turned round and said, "The drunkard shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Yes! he shall have an inheritance, but it is in that place where though he thirst for the wine, the red wine as it stirreth itself in the cup, not a drop of water shall be given to quench his thirst.

There are many other characters with whom in like manner we may reason of "*temperance*;" but at present we have only a few words to say to the *worldling*, who, perhaps, in his character, comprises all the rest. The *worldling* is one who lives in the world as if he never were to leave it. Amidst the bounties of Providence he never thinks of the giver; amidst

the fluctuations of time he gives himself no concern about the approach of eternity : in short, he lives as if he had no soul to save, as if God and religion were all a fable, as if there were no heaven above and no hell beneath. Stopping such a one in his career of folly, we would say, be temperate in earth-born pursuits ; make not the immortal soul the drudge of your body ; and, for the pleasures of a short passing hour, barter not your eternal peace. Remember what you are—you are a being that shall never die. And whither are you going ? to eternity ! And what preparation are you making for that long journey ? none—absolutely none ! True, you are never idle ; you are ever “ pulling down your barns and building greater.” But what will this avail thee in the hour that thy soul shall be required of thee ? Will it do away the terrors of the last enemy, or appease the wrath of Him that sitteth on the throne, or open for thee the gates of immortality ? Ah ! no. As Johnson once said to Garrick, when the latter was showing him a fine estate which he had lately purchased, “ It is this which renders death terrible.” Yes ! these things will only aggravate your doom, and increase your eternal misery. Once more we beseech such to be temperate in earth-born pursuits. Remember what you are—you are a sinner lost ; and what, if you continue as you are, you must shortly become—a sinner *lost, lost, lost for ever !*

But the last topic, and which he employed as an argument to enforce his reasonings on righteousness and temperance, was, “ the judgment to come.” It is obvious, from many considerations, that this is but the infancy of our being. Soon the youngest in this assembly shall breathe his last ; then he shall be wrapped in his shroud ! A day after that he shall be covered up in the dark coffin ; a few days more and he shall be carried to the sepulchre of his fathers. But where all the while has the *spirit* gone ? it is the body only that was wrapped in the shroud, that was covered up in the coffin, that was laid in the grave ; whither has that spirit fled which defies the stroke of death, which shall live when the sun

shall be extinguished, and all nature be dissolved ? Whither has that spirit gone ? It departed with the last breath ; it has risen above the horizon of things seen and temporal ; naked and disembodied, it has been ushered into the presence of the Eternal, there to give in its account ! Here a law was given it, there it will be asked how that law has been obeyed : talents were here committed to its care, there it will be inquired what use was made of them : in this world a vineyard was given it to cultivate, and in the next the fruit will be sought for. And though the sinner here may escape the visitation of wrath—though he may be praised by an unthinking world when he lives, and be honoured by it when he dies, yet on that day appointed for winding up the affairs of this earth the sentence of men shall be reversed, and the individual shall receive according to his deeds. It is seldom we think of that day—that last day—that day of the Lord—that day of days. Yet on that day when the sinner's eyes shall be opened to behold the judgment-seat and Him that sits thereon, then conscience, no longer asleep, shall speak in thunders louder than the crash of falling worlds, and more awful than the blast of the archangel's trumpet ! Then, it will recall to his mind the sabbaths, the sermons, and the sacraments on earth he has despised ; and, methinks, among other things his thoughts will revert to the place where we are now met. And as he remembers how the preacher this day reasoned of “ righteousness, temperance, and judgment” to come, the voice of conscience will thunder in his ear, “ You knew your duty, but you did it not !” And when driven away from the judgment-seat, and when passing through the wide open gates of wo, and when lying down amidst the weeping, and cursing, and wo that are there, still the same voice again, louder and still louder, shall proclaim in his ears, “ You knew your duty, but you did it not !” And when he sees across the gulf Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, and hears the songs of the ransomed multitude coming down from the gates of heaven, then the voice of his sleepless conscience, again and again,

shall for ever proclaim, "You might have been saved, but you would not! You might have stood in yonder throng, you might have joined in yonder anthem! You knew your duty, but you did it not!"

### III. THE EFFECT WHICH THIS SERMON PRODUCED.

That sermon is worthless which does not reach the heart; and that heart must have been hard, indeed, that could have withstood the reasoning of an inspired apostle, and on such important subjects. He felt—but was it grief for his past sins? was it hope in the divine mercy? was it reliance on the power and faithfulness of Him who is able to save unto the uttermost? No! It was not grief for sin, but terror on account of its punishment; it was not that godly sorrow which calms and purifies the heart, but the foretaste of despair which rages in outer wo. "He trembled." The apostle had entered with the candle of the Lord into the recesses of his bosom, and disclosed all those images of wickedness which, with all the cowardice of conscious guilt, Felix had striven to conceal from himself; and so vividly did Paul portray the doings of that day when the books shall be opened and the judgment set, that Felix was made to feel as if it had already arrived—as if he had seen the Judge make bare his holy arm, and heard that sentence pronounced which should doom him to eternal despair. And, neither the sophistry of a deceitful heart, nor the suggestions of the wicked one, nor the fatal influence of Drusilla, nor the flattering speeches of Tertullus, nor the pomp and splendour of his office as the viceroy of the Roman emperor—not one nor all of these things could pacify the fears of his guilty awakened conscience. "He trembled," like the meanest criminal that ever stood at his own tribunal; "he trembled," like the benighted traveller, when all on a sudden the lightning discloses the awful precipice on whose brink he is approaching; "he trembled," like the man under sentence of death, when in his cell at the midnight hour he hears the knocking of the hammer erecting the scaffold on which he is to die on the morrow; "he trembled"—his countenance

was changed, his thoughts troubled him, his knees smote against each other like Belshazzar, when he saw the handwriting on the wall that proclaimed his days to be numbered, and his kingdom to be departed from him; "he trembled"—but who can describe the fears of a guilty conscience brooding over its woes—

Unfit for earth, undoom'd for heaven,  
Darkness above, despair beneath,  
Around it flame, within it death?

These impressions on the mind of Felix were the result of God's Spirit; and if Felix had acted right, he ought to have humbled himself under the mighty hand of God, and sought for pardon and mercy through faith in that Christ of whom the apostle spake to him. But these salutary impressions were but of short duration: like one suddenly awakened out of his sleep, he felt a moment's alarm; but, with that infatuation common to fallen humanity, he again folded his arms to slumber. Could the apostle have told him how he could be happy without requiring to be holy—how he might escape hell and enjoy earth—how he might be delivered from the curse denounced against his sins, but left in the enjoyment of the sins themselves, gladly would Felix have listened to his message. But since the apostle could preach no gospel but that which proclaimed salvation, not *in* sin, but *from* sin; since the apostle could promise a happiness only flowing from and parallel with holiness, what did the poor infatuated Felix resolve to do? He dismisses the preacher, but retains his Drusilla; he clings to the pleasures of sin which are but for a moment, but he parts with his eternal salvation: to the message, to the messenger of God, to God himself, he says, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee!" But we never read that that convenient season ever came; he never, as far as we learn, sent for Paul again, at least to hear the gospel preached; and the next time that Felix trembled was, we have reason to fear, in that place where there is weeping, and "trembling," and wo, without ceasing and without rest for ever. Amen.

## SERMON X.

### THE SACRIFICE AND EXALTATION OF CHRIST.

BY THE REV. W. ATHERTON.

“But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.”—Heb. x. 12, 13.

THE apostle is showing, in this chapter, the superiority of the sacrifice and priesthood of Jesus Christ, when compared with those sacrifices which were offered, and those priests that gave attendance, at the Jewish altar; and on which things the Hebrew Christians had trusted for acceptance with God.

He shows their great superiority by a variety of arguments. The first argument is drawn from *the priesthood of the people*: “Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin:” but the Christian’s High Priest is the Lord from heaven, “God over all, blessed for ever.” The Jewish high priests, in their official ministrations, had first to offer sacrifices for their own sins, which was a tacit confession that they were sinners. The Christian’s High Priest, however, was without sin: he knew no sin, had no sin of his own to atone for, and was more perfectly fitted to make atonement for the sins of others.

Another argument he draws from *the sacrifices themselves*: they offered the blood of bulls, and of goats, and of lambs, which could not take away sin. Our High Priest offered himself, a Lamb without blemish; he poured out the price of our redemption for us, which is emphatically called the blood of Christ.

He draws another argument from *the multiplicity* of their sacrifices, which were repeated, and offered year by year continually; proving that they “could

never make the comers thereunto perfect. “But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.” It was so full of dignity, so full of merit, so teeming with virtue; it was stamped with such an infinite desert, that such a sacrifice once offered was enough. The Jewish high priests, in humble reverence and in readiness to serve, stood within the veil offering the same sacrifices:— “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God.” This one sacrifice of Christ stands opposed to the multiplicity of sacrifices that were offered under the law.

Sacrifice, you know, was a religious ordinance, in which a minister set apart an animal as a victim to endure the pain and the death which had been incurred by the transgression of the guilty sinner; or it was presented to God in order to procure some special favour, or to propitiate divine justice. This mode of worship is certainly very ancient. We are not to look for the origin of sacrifice to Sinai, nor even to Abraham and Noah—whose sacrifices the Lord received as a sweet smelling savour—but we are to carry our views back as far as the days of Adam. And as the practice was ancient, there is no doubt the appointment was divine. certainly the light of nature would never have sought, nor could the power of human reason discover, such a strange mode of approaching God as that of offering an innocent victim in the place of the guilty. Besides, how could persons

expect that God would have accepted that which he had never required? If God had never required, how could it be expected he would have received? Or wherein could they have exercised that faith which was indispensable, unless God had made some promise in reference to it? When we find that sacrifice was appointed immediately from the time when sin entered the world; immediately about the time when the great Deliverer was promised, in what other light can we view it, than as intended to point out this great sacrifice that should be offered for the sins of the world?

We are not, however, to understand this Deliverer as being man only. If we look into this epistle, we shall find the apostle representing him as greater than the prophets: he more perfectly revealing to men the mind and will of God, more clearly opening to them the path of salvation, and as being the partaker of a higher life. He is described as greater than Moses; as more intimate with God than Moses; the author of a more excellent dispensation; the bringer in of a better covenant, and a more distinguished leader of the people of God. He is greater than Aaron as a priest, being a priest of a heavenly, a divine, and an unchanging kind: he is a priest, not after the order of Aaron, but "a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." He is described as greater than David as a king: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." His "dominion is an everlasting dominion;" and of the increase of his kingdom and of his government, thank God, there shall be no end. He is greater than Abraham, as the father of a more numerous and spiritual race, and as bringing more sons unto glory; greater than the angels themselves, and of whom it was said at the beginning of creation, "Let all the angels of God worship him." All this goes to prove the proper divinity of Him who was the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his person, and the heir of all things.

THIS GOD-MAN OFFERED ONE SACRIFICE FOR SIN, and that was the sacrifice of himself, which we may consider as implying surrender: he offered *his body*.

The offering of our Redeemer's body, though certainly acute, and tragical, and torturing, has been considerably exaggerated at the hands of some injudicious persons. He was bound with cords in an uneasy position; he was smitten on the face, both with a mock sceptre and the rude hand of the wicked; he was scourged, or whipped, which, in his state of body, after his agony in the garden, must have been exquisitely painful; his sacred limbs were unnaturally extended, nails were driven through the sinews of his hands and feet, and the whole weight of his body was sustained by those nails. The prophet says, he "gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: they gave him gall for his meat, and vinegar for his drink; so that his visage was marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men." These were sufferings of no common kind.

But, in suffering, he offered *his mind*. The sufferings of our Redeemer's soul must be considered as the soul of his sufferings. These he anticipated at a distance, when he said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" We must, however, go into the garden of Gethsemane, to witness this sacrifice offered. Being there, with those of his disciples alone who had witnessed his transfiguration, he became exceedingly heavy and sorrowful; that is, he bore such an oppressive weight of sorrow and anguish, as threatened to dissolve the union of the body and soul. At length he gave vent to his feelings in words, saying, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;" that is, if some help be not sent, if some support be not afforded from heaven, this night, in this garden, death must ensue; for the body cannot sustain the mind under such a weight of anguish as I now experience. He falls on his face, and cries, "Father, if it be possible"—to display and to harmonize thy perfections—if it be possible to save a world of sinners in any other way than this, "let this cup pass from me:" and when he had thus prayed, he broke into a perspiration, and that was a

sweat of blood. Now, brethren, what must have been the agony of his mind, when, in the bloom and prime of health, supported by conscious innocence, raised above the natural fear of death, with the prospect of an abundant entrance into the kingdom of heaven;—what must have been the agony of his mind when even the vital fluid, interrupted in its natural course of circulation, was forced through the coats of the veins, the vessels, and integuments, and bathed his body in a sweat of blood! Surely the cause and the design of those sufferings were not of an ordinary character. But, said the prophet, “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied” in its present and everlasting consequences.

He offered, in sacrifice, *his glory*; by which we understand how glory will follow up the shame. Every good man has a proper sense with regard to dignity of character and propriety of conduct, and must be sensibly alive to his own reputation; so that when he is wounded in these, he is deprived of that which is most valuable to his feelings, and most important in a worldly point of view. Now, our Redeemer’s feelings were not blunted and stoical; he was alive to his reputation; his sense of indignity, and shame, and dishonour, were exquisite; nay, they were delicately fine; and when they called him an enemy to civil government, and deceiver of the people; when they said, “He is mad, a glutton, and a wine bibber;” when they said he had a devil, that he was not fit to live; he must have felt the indignity with great acuteness. But when his private grief is invaded by the mob, with lanterns, as if they came to apprehend a person who had recently committed some horrid murder; when he is to be dragged from one magistrate’s house to another, in the dead of the night, to be arraigned on charges of high crimes and misdemeanours; to be tried, condemned, smitten on the face, spit upon, scourged, arrayed in emblems of mock majesty, compelled to bear his own cross, executed between two notorious cut-throat thieves; betrayed, denied, and forsaken by those who knew him;

surely this must have been exquisitely trying. His glory and his honour must have been swallowed up in shame but for “the joy that was set before him.” And what was that? The joy of bringing many sons to glory. What was that? Why, to rescue thee, sinner, from depravity and misery; to snatch thee from the death of sin, and to bring thee to blessedness. “For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

He offered, in sacrifice, *the consolations of heaven’s protection*, when he cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” There has been some theological discussion respecting the sense in which the eternal God forsook the man Christ Jesus; and various solutions have been offered to meet the difficulty. Suffice it to say, that there was a mysterious union of nature between the eternal God and the man Christ Jesus. This, from his incarnation, was, and to eternity must be, indissoluble. To divide these two would be to deprive the Saviour’s blood of its efficacy, and undermine the great doctrine of the atonement. There was a union of favour, a display of grace, such as subsists between the blessed God and his adopted children; the same in nature, but in Christ superior in degree. Now, this cannot be lost without sin; and Jesus Christ would not fall into this, for with him, and in him, the Father was ever pleased.

But there is a union of protection. God has said to his people that he is a wall of fire round about the righteous; that he will encompass them as with a shield. This protection, however, he can withdraw on certain occasions, for wise reasons, as he did in the case of Job. So long as this union of protection remained to our Lord, the Jews might take up stones to stone him; they might lead him to the brow of the hill to cast him down, but they could not touch a hair of his head. But now the dogs of hell opened their mouths on him; the strong bulls of Bashan beset him around; now earth and hell are allowed to do their worst; and

such is that worst, as to lead him to cry to God, "Why hast thou abandoned me? why hast thou forsaken me?"

He offered, in sacrifice, *his life*. Life is dear to every creature. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend;" but "when we were *enemies*, Christ died for us." The Redeemer said that none could take away his life; he had power to lay it down, and he had power to take it again: he laid down his life for the sheep. We therefore find that his death was earlier than was usually the case with malefactors; earlier than the death of the malefactors who were crucified with him; not through extreme torture, not through loss of blood, not through the breaking of his bones; for we are told "he cried with a loud voice," showing that there was no loss of strength, demonstrating that the vital organs were full of life, that every pulse was beating, and that he died voluntarily.

He offered, in sacrifice, *his will*. Suffering can never be loved for its own sake; and shame and death are terrible foes. The Redeemer prayed that the cup of suffering might pass from him; yet he gave his person into the hands of those who put it to torture: he voluntarily resigned himself to that train of overwhelming and distressing ideas that threw his mind into an agony that bathed him in a bloody sweat: he gave up the consolation of heaven's protection. Here there was no force, there was no compulsion; every thing was free: this man offered himself, body, and spirit, and glory, and life, for mankind.

Perhaps it may be asked, *for what purpose he offered this sacrifice*. Some tell us that Christ died to confirm the truth of his doctrine. No, brethren, his doctrines rested upon their own evidence, on their moral influence, confirmed by his stupendous miracles. It has been said by some that he thus suffered and died to set an example to his followers how they should endure suffering. No; he lived to teach us to live, and he has left an example that we should follow his steps. Whenever we think or read about the

sufferings of Christ, we are immediately directed to sin: *he died for our sins*; Christ suffered once for sin, the just for the unjust; he bare our sins in his own body on the tree; he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities. We know of no sacrifice being offered, either from the Old or New Testament, but what it had some connexion with sin. That religion—call it Unitarian, call it Socinian, or what you please—that religion that has no sacrifice for sin, is not Judaism; for the sacrifice of Christ formed a very important part of the Christian and Jewish religion; it is not Christianity, for the sacrifice of Christ is the glory of the Christian system. Jesus died for sins not his own, for he was without sin; he died for the sins of the whole world.

This man offered himself a sacrifice for sin to avert the *consequences of it*. The transgressions of man exposed him to the displeasure of God, to the stroke of justice, to the wrath of heaven, the death of the body, to anguish of mind. Jesus Christ paid the penalty, that he might deliver the sinner from the consequences of his sins; and every sinner that accepts of the sacrifice of Christ by faith, the finger of God's mercy, dipped in the blood of his Son, writes that sinner as one over whom the second death shall never have power.

He died in order that he might remove *the presence of sin by doing away the love of it*, by cleansing the guilty in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, rendering the person without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; that he might so renew the nature of man, so endear the principles of grace to him, that he might deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live above the practices of sin.

And further, he offered himself a sacrifice to recover *the forfeiture of sin*. Sin had forfeited the image, the love, the protection of God. Through sin man had lost every spark of happiness in life and comfort in death, and every title to glory; but by the sacrifice of Christ we receive all that we lost in the transgression.

This sacrifice was so complete in both

body and mind; it was so voluntary, and of his own accord; it was stamped with such an infinite desert, that one such sacrifice, oblation, or satisfaction, as Christ offered, was enough; it never needed to be repeated, either in the mass or in any of its parts. It does not need human merits, human sufferings: the one offering of Christ is enough, if you believe it and you will accept it, and if you will accept of it as a full and present salvation. One such sacrifice is a sufficient atonement for the sins of the world.

We are now directed to THE EXALTATION OF OUR REDEEMER. This was through the medium of his resurrection. That Jesus Christ really died on the cross, was attested by the water and the blood that flowed after the insertion of the spear, anatomically demonstrating that the heart had been pierced. And that he rose again, according to the Scriptures, we have conclusive evidence. We have the testimony of the angel, who said, "He is not here, he is risen." We have the testimony of the women who were early at the synagogue. We have the testimony of the two doubting disciples who met him by the way. We have the testimony of Thomas, who would not believe his eyes; he must have another sense, touch, convinced. We have the testimony of all the twelve; the testimony of "five hundred brethren at once;" the testimony of Paul, who was "as one born out of due time." We have the testimony of the Roman soldiers, who became as dead men; to say nothing of the story invented by the Jews, that his disciples had stolen away the body while the soldiers slept.

There is no fact connected with our Lord's history, of more importance than his resurrection. Upon the truth of this event depends the divinity of his mission, the truth of his doctrine, the credibility of his miracles, the satisfaction of his atonement, the truth of his promises, especially the promise of his raising the human body from the dust. Seeing that there is no fact of more consequence than the resurrection, there is no fact that has such abundant evidence. "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits

of them that slept." Having led out his disciples as far as his favourite Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them, and while he was in the act of blessing them, a cloud received him out of their sight.

And he has now "sat down at the right hand of God." God is a great and invisible Spirit, with whom, literally, there can be neither standing nor recumbency; we must, therefore, understand this phrase figuratively: and it is, first, expressive of *rest*. The Jewish high priest, when he entered within the veil, never sat down: his work was not done; he had to return, and to come back and offer the same sacrifice, if his life were spared: "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." Not that Jesus Christ had ceased from his mediatorial acts; not that he has ceased to be alive to the interests of his church and of his people. No; he bears the names of his people on the breastplate of his heart; he knows their state, he is touched with the feeling of their infirmities; he receives, perfumes, and presents their prayers; he sends down on them the Holy Ghost, he answers their requests, he avenges their injuries, he marks in his book their works of faith and labours of love. And it is to be expected that you give him some token of that kind, that he may have works of faith to record of you. Moreover, he is superintending the repairing of their mansions, and the brightening of the crowns which shall adorn their ransomed heads. As it respects suffering, active and passive, he has sat down: when he shall appear again, it will be without a sin-offering to the salvation of the world.

But this expression, "sat down," intimates his *being honoured*. To be placed at the right hand of eastern majesty, was an honour for court favourites and successful generals. The highest honour Solomon could confer on his mother, Bethsheba, was to give her a place at his right hand. When we read that Jesus Christ is at the right hand of God, we understand he is raised to the highest honour; he is raised above all principalities and powers: having done his work to

the perfect satisfaction of his Father, it has pleased God to give him a name: "that, at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Hence the language of heaven is, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

This phrase is expressive of *power, of authority, and dominion*. Indeed, the right hand is sometimes employed as an emblem of power. Now, when our Redeemer is placed at the right hand of God, we understand him as invested with power: he is now the ruler of all things, the governor of all worlds. The Lord Jesus Christ is King; and all the acts of his government, all the acts of his reign, are for the encouragement, glory, and stability of his church; for the present and eternal welfare of his people. He "is given to be the Head over all things to the church, which is his body:" he can therefore raise up whatever instruments he pleases; he can give these instruments whatever talents he thinks proper; and whether their talents shall be many and great, or few and small, he can render those talents efficient and sufficient to answer the end for which they are given; for with him is the residue of the Spirit.

He holds in his hand the sceptre of the kingdom of Providence; so that he can turn the hearts of men as he listeth—kings, and peasants, and savages, saints and sinners. He can make the events of trade and commerce; he can make the wrath of man, and the wrath of the very devil, to serve him and to serve his cause. He ever reigns in the kingdom of nature, and makes the rivers in their channels, and the stars in their courses, fight in his cause. Jesus Christ can bring whom and what he will to do the purposes of his grace and salvation.

It is on this ground that missionary exertions are based. Without these we could do nothing, and expect nothing. Our Redeemer based the subject himself here: "All power," says he, "is given unto me in heaven and in earth." And

what are the next words? "Go, ye, therefore, and teach all nations." It would have been useless, worthless, for us to have gone into the world to preach the gospel, if he had not received the power and the dominion. Yes, my brethren; it is thus looking at the position, looking at the magnitude of the work, contemplating our exalted Redeemer sitting at the right hand of our heavenly Father, invested with all power and with all sovereignty, that we see nothing can withstand the power of his will. There he shall sit until—according to the promise of the Father to him, "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool"—the purposes of his will shall be fulfilled.

Of THE ADVERSARIES OF JESUS CHRIST, we observe, first, that *Satan* is the most subtle, ancient, and formidable. When tares were sown among the wheat, it was said, "an enemy hath done this;" and it is further added, "the enemy is the wicked one." Satan was the enemy of Christ's person, and mission, and saving work: he showed his enmity when, on the cross, "he bruised the heel of the seed of the woman." He is the enemy of man; and he shows his enmity to him by blinding his understanding, hardening his heart, polluting his imagination, sensualizing his passions and his appetites, and robbing God of the affections and the services of the creatures he has made. Satan is the enemy of the pious; to their holiness, their happiness, their usefulness; and this he shows by agitating, perplexing, and distressing their minds on the subject of Christian experience, throwing hinderances in the way of duty, and tempting them to depart from the living God.

But, my brethren, this adversary shall be the footstool of the woman's all-conquering seed that was given to bruise his head. Already this adversary has been conquered, when the Saviour spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly; and by that general outpouring of the Spirit of God which shall fall on us by and by, the power of Satan shall be broken, the armour on which he has trusted shall be taken away,

his goods shall be spoiled; the angel having the key of the bottomless pit shall lay hold of the old serpent, and shall bind him, and confine him, and seal his ruin, never more to go about and deceive the people.

Another adversary of Jesus Christ is *Error*. Error may be said to be a hydra with many heads.

The first head which presents itself in this hydra has the face of a beast; by which we understand the errors of *popery*—so decided an enemy to Christ that that system in the New Testament is called Anti-Christ. That system takes from the common people the word of life, which is the key of knowledge. It takes the ordinances of men, and doctrines of devils, for oracles of God. It exalts the creature to the throne of the Creator. It gives to saints and angels the honour and worship due to the Saviour of the world. It gives license to crime by the sale of indulgences. It has ever infused a persecuting and uncharitable disposition. It has blinded the understandings and deadened the consciences of myriads of men for ages, and opposes almost impassable barriers to the spread of experimental and practical godliness.

Now, this enemy shall be the footstool of Jesus Christ. With the flash of his eye, at the brightness of his appearing, the man of sin, the son of perdition, shall be subdued. The great angel has already cast the millstone into the pit, saying, "Thus shall Babylon fall, the seat of the beast."

Another of these errors has the face of the false prophet, by which we may understand the delusions, impurities, and abominations of *Mahometanism*. The next has the face of a dragon; by which we understand the cruel, the impure, the licentious, the hellish abominations of *Paganism*, or *Heathenism*. Paganism gives to the mind the falsest idea of God, or extinguishes the idea of the Supreme Being from the human mind. Heathenism substitutes, in the place of the great Jehovah, idols and devils; worships them by the impure rites, propitiates them by the bloodiest sacrifices.

Paganism presents the most delusive prospect of happiness and of safety.

Now, these are enemies to Christ, because he is light and truth: these are false as hell, and dark as the chambers of death. These systems degrade God's creatures, rob the Redeemer, murder the souls of men; and as such they must come down: by the general diffusion of knowledge, by the spread of the Scriptures, by the piety and by the influence of God's people, these systems shall be overturned. Every error of the church of God—Phariseeism, Antinomianism, denying the Lord that bought them—will be brought to lick the dust. The conflict has begun; some noble battles have been won, and shall go on till all is subdued by the sword of the Lord and of Gideon.

Another enemy is to be found in *wicked and unconverted men*. We might conceive it possible for superstition and idolatry to be destroyed from the earth; and yet, so long as men are unconverted to God, they are enemies to Christ. Men are born into the world with a nature of enmity, not submitting to God's law; every sin man commits is an act of hostility against the living God. They are enemies to his justice, which is pledged to punish them; they are enemies to his law, which restrains their passions and abridges them in their gratification of them; they are enemies to Christ's gospel, which requires sacrifices that they are unwilling to make, and imposes terms to which they are unwilling to submit; they are enemies to his people, who resemble him, and whose piety condemns their licentious laxity.

But these enemies shall be the footstool of the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Upon unconverted men Jesus Christ will employ his gospel, and his word on their understanding, and his Spirit on their consciences, and his providence on their circumstances and their bodies; and these weapons shall be mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds. By these weapons some shall see their error, shall discover their wickedness, shall perceive their danger, and tremble at it; shall let the weapons of their rebellion

drop out of their hands; shall crawl, like guilty worms, to the footstool of Christ's mercy; shall cordially embrace, with arms of faith, the despised Nazarene; they shall give him their hearts, and affections, and lives, in devotional obedience; and they shall joyfully suffer for his sake. The enemies of Christ shall become his guests; their wills, their consciences, their affections, their powers, being subdued to the obedience of faith; and those who withstand these means of mercy, who resist these weapons of grace, shall be swept away with the besom of destruction, when, from the dense smoke of the perdition of hell, they shall confess, as it is said of the apostate Julian, "O, thou Galilean, thou hast conquered me!" I refused to be overcome by the power of thy word, by the power of thy gospel; and now, in my turn, I am overcome by the damnation of hell!

Another enemy of Christ is *death*. He is said to be the last enemy that shall be destroyed. Death is shrunk from with almost instinctive abhorrence by all animated nature. To the wicked man, death is the king of terrors; it separates him from his pleasures, cuts him off from his sins, drives him from his idols; it does away the possibility of moral and spiritual improvement, it seals his everlasting ruin. And even some of the saints view death as a foe, having been all their lifetime subject to bondage. Brethren, what devastation has death made in the fair workmanship of God! See the blasting, withering influence of death on the finest animal frames, the brightest intellectual agencies! Who can ever look at the corpse of a parent, a husband, a child, a friend, without saying, "An enemy hath done this?"

Yes; and this enemy holds in bondage of corruption the bodies of the saints who have died in the Lord. It is very true this enemy is a conquered one. Jesus Christ encountered death in his dark domain; and, as he entered it, he said, "O, death, I will be thy plagues; O, grave, I will be thy destruction:" he snapt those chains of which it was impossible for him to be held; and he rose superior to its

power. As all have sinned against God, the sentence is passed upon all: the saint as well as the sinner must meet this great foe; they must meet, they must struggle, they must grapple; in the stern grasp and in the cold embrace of death, that fair frame of thine must fall. But thou fallest to rise in glory: as thou fallest thou liest. Thy vile body shall be changed, and made like unto Christ's glorious body. Soon the trumpet shall sound, the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and death and hell shall be cast into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: death shall be done away, and God shall be all in all.

Lastly, all these enemies have been made by one worse than the devil himself; and that enemy is *sin*. Sin made a demon of one of the brightest angels that stood before the throne; sin made innocent man an enemy in his heart and a vassal in his life against God; sin brought all the error and idolatry, and superstitions and abominations that are on the earth; sin "brought death into the world, and all our wo." When the gospel shall be universally preached, when the gospel shall exert its saving influence on the children of men, then the practices of sin shall come to an end; and when all the people of God shall be brought safe to their Father's house, sin shall be annihilated. And for this purpose the Son of God was manifested; for this purpose he offered himself a sacrifice for sin; for this purpose he has commanded his gospel to be preached to every creature; for this purpose he is at this moment seated at the right hand of God, invested with all power, with all energy to employ whatever instrument or agent he thinks proper, to give a blessing to those means that they may be effectual. And when death shall be done away, and when sin shall be annihilated, he will rise up from his seat, and not till then, and deliver up the kingdom into the hands of his Father; and God shall be all in all.

Here we discover, brethren, *the character of sinners*. They are said to be enemies to Christ. Enemies to Christ? Can that be true? Is that not a libel on human nature that deserves to be prose-

cuted and punished by the judges? An enemy to goodness? An enemy to benevolence? An enemy to him that hath loved us, and given himself for us? An enemy to him in whom met and combined whatsoever things are true, and lovely, and of good report? Strange as it may be—and one would scarcely think there was scarcely sufficient iniquity in any human nature to be an enemy of Jesus Christ—experience and practice say that we will not that grace shall reign in us and rule over us. So long as we refuse to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, so long we are found in a state of enmity to Christ.

We learn, again, that *these enemies of Christ, these unconverted persons, must be his footstool*, whether at home or abroad. Are any of you unconverted? Are any of you in a state of hostility of mind to the blessed Jesus? Remember you must come down. Will you be subdued by justice or by mercy? Will you be conquered by the sceptre of his grace, or will you be broken in pieces by the iron rod of his wrath? Will you be subdued by the Lamb of God, or will you be torn in pieces by the Lion of the tribe of Judah? Must Jesus Christ conquer you by the sword of his Spirit, and by the power of his blood; or must you be brought to submission by the flames of hell? O, kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way! He has offered a sacrifice for you and for the world; he has sat down at the right hand of God his Father, and he will never rise from that seat till the world is saved or lost—till thou art converted or cast into outer darkness.

Finally, we see *the duty of the people to extend by conquest the triumphs of the Redeemer*, the empire of the Saviour; to bring home his rebel outcasts, that they may be saved from sin and Satan's snare. Look at the vast population of the globe; what a melancholy aspect it wears! In fifty years perhaps the whole of this generation will be swept off the stage of time; and, if unconverted, where will that portion be? Now, the Lord has no pleasure in the destruction of sinners;

but we know no way of bringing these rebels to God but by the moral suasion of the gospel. Jesus Christ could subdue his rebels by miracles, by providences, by angels; but when he redeems men, it will be by himself overcoming men; and when he converts men, it will be by the agency of man, the instrumentality of man. Where is that person that has a spark of love to Christ, of zeal for the glory of his name, who has tasted of the sweets of his forgiving love, who does not feel a wish to have something to do in bringing these rebels back to God? Jesus Christ has prepared his soldiers; he has marshalled his powers, he has equipped them for the fight; some of them have taken the field; others are ready to go forth to fight the battles of the Lord: he has done his part; we are required to do ours. We are to pray for the extension of his kingdom; we are to bear his banner in the arms of faith and prayer; we are to supply the pecuniary means so long as human instrumentality is employed in extending the triumphs of the cross. Money will be requisite; and we ought to be forward in supplying these pecuniary means. The battle has begun, the conquests have commenced; the work is going on, and God has honoured you by giving you a part in it. We read that even the dark papist is turning over the pages of God's word; that the Mahomedan has confessed the founder of his system an impostor; that pagans have been converted, and now despise idolatry. We know that within the last twelve months, in our own country, ten thousand who were rebels to Christ have been subdued by the word of Christ, and numbers in our foreign stations. Yes; the kingdom of hell is shaking—the gates of perdition tremble. Let us not rest, but take up a bold and manful stand in our own places, until we join in that blessed acclamation, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ—the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" Yes, and he will reign till he has subdued all to the obedience of faith, till death and sin are dead, and God shall be all in all. Amen.

## SCRIPTURE DIFFICULTIES.

NO. I.

SOCRATES is reported to have said, concerning the writings of Heraclitus, that so much of them as could be understood must be pronounced excellent and admirable; and that *that* portion might be believed to be so which could not be understood. It is very certain that the objectors to the sacred Scriptures, in resting their opposition upon a few obscure places and apparent contradictions, have displayed little of the wisdom and none of the candour of that amiable heathen; and our modern Deists, at least, appear very unlikely to be benefited by an example of modesty and fairness, which the malignity of their minds disqualify them to appreciate. They have disdained no artifice, however mean, and withheld no railing, however violent and unjust, by which they could excite the very lowest and worst passions of human nature against revelation. An awful spirit of blindness and rashness is fallen upon them, and their attempts to make good their argument resemble any thing rather than that dispassionate and serious spirit of inquiry, which alone becomes so grave and momentous a question, or which could lead to its satisfactory termination.

It is by no means to be admitted that, upon the solution of doctrinal, historical, philological, or philosophical difficulties, depends the question at issue between the infidel and the Christian. The main body of the Christian evidence stands quite independent of the imperfections in the text, or the obscurities in the contents of revelation. Let the question of external evidence be first settled, before the book itself be scrutinized; then let the Christian advocate avail himself of the benefits of the first stage of proof through which he has advanced; or let him require, before he proceeds to the solution of the difficult places, what he has a right to assume, that the book is of divine origin, and is to be estimated fairly by this pretension, as being placed, by the very fact professed, in circumstances altogether different from any human composition.

The infidel must either dispute the evidence, and disprove the facts which attest the authority of the revelation, or he must take the revelation upon its own assumption, and proceed to show that its contents cannot be worthy of God to impart, nor of man to receive. It is but very rarely that infidels attempt any thing more than to carp at the mysterious and obscure parts of the sacred volume. These they endeavour to isolate as much as possible from all its sublimer and less questionable portions; they pass over in silence the great mass of its contents, and fix, with malicious subtilty, upon a few hard sayings, which they endeavour to wrest from their connexion, or to pervert to an import altogether foreign; and which, by being placed together, repeated with disingenuous exaggerations, and, in their condensed form, surrounded with the murky and distorting atmosphere of hostile matter, present a far more formidable appearance than really belongs to them, or than they are ever felt to possess, when they are casually met with in the fair and honest perusal of the sacred volume itself.

## THE SCRIPTURES.

THE word of God is bread that nourishes some, and a sword that pierces others. It is the odour of life to those who live by faith, and die sincerely to themselves;—it is the odour of death to those who are alienated from God, and live shut up in themselves by pride. The best nourishment turns to poison in corrupted stomachs: whoever looks for scandal in the word of God, deserves to find it there to his own ruin. God has so mixed light and shade in his word, that the humble and docile find there nothing but truth and comfort, whilst the indocile and presumptuous find nothing but error and incredulity. All the difficulties immediately vanish when the mind is cured of presumption: then, according to the rule of St. Augustin, *we pass over all we do not understand, and are edified at what we do understand.*—*Fenelon.*

## SERMON XI.

THE INFLUENCE OF MEMORY INCREASING THE MISERY OF THE LOST.

BY THE REV. J. A. JAMES.

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*"But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented."*—Luke xvi. 25.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ was not only the greatest of all preachers, but unquestionably the most awful. His discourses abound with more frequent allusions to the punishment of the guilty, and with more fearful descriptions of it, than can be found in almost any other portion of holy Scripture. How tremendously fearful is the parable of which the text is a part; in which He that hath the keys of the unseen world seems to throw the door of it ajar for a few moments, and to give us a glimpse of that world where hope never enters, and from which misery never can pass. Much of the parable, I admit, is what might be called drapery; but it is not the drapery of error, but of truth. The sentiments conveyed to us are these: that there is a state of punishment prepared for the wicked in another world, and a state of blessedness for the righteous: that every man when he dies enters upon one or other of these states; that the circumstances of the present life (I mean those of riches or of poverty) have no influence of themselves upon man's eternal destiny. Poverty, if united with piety, will exclude no man from heaven; riches, if connected with, impenitence and irreligion, will keep no man from hell.

But there is another sentiment conveyed in the language which I have selected as the subject of discourse this evening, and that is, *that memory will have an important influence in aggravating the misery of the damned.* "Son, remember," was the expression which our Lord put into the lips of the father of the faith-

ful, when addressing himself to the rich man that lifted up his eyes in torment. There is a dreadful taunt in the admonition, a sting not to be described. This, then, my hearers, is the subject of discourse on the present occasion—the influence of memory increasing the misery of the lost.

That there is a state of inconceivable and interminable punishment for the wicked in another world, is one of the first principles of revealed truth, which cannot be discredited without withholding assent from the Bible. In that inspired book a state of rewards and punishments is placed in the very front of its announcements, and it is interwoven with the whole texture of revealed truth. To doubt this, is not so far to mistake as to contradict the testimony of God. Yes, my hearers, hell is a dreadful reality. The poet may make it the source of gloomy and awful images with which to adorn the creations of his genius, the dramatist may work it up into a form for public amusement, the swearer may employ it to add venom and fury to his oath, the scoffer may use it to point his epigram, or sharpen his wit; but notwithstanding this shocking levity, this vulgar obscenity, this awful impiety, it is a fact, whatever men do with it, that there is a lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, and that "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."

It is not improbable that the greater part of the punishment of the wicked will be mental anguish: the curse of

Jehovah will fall upon a spirit made bare to receive it. The sufferings of the lost will arise probably more from their own reflections and dispositions, than any positive inflictions of the Almighty; a circumstance which ought to increase rather than diminish the apprehension of man concerning this punishment: for what are the tortures of the body in the case of a rational being to those of the mind? What is mere pain, received through the nerves, compared with heart-remorse and self-reproach? By universal consent, there is no hell like that of a guilty conscience; other punishments are without us, but the source of this is within us. It is admitted on all hands, that the faculties of the soul will be inconceivably strengthened in another world; the immortal part of man will then arrive at the maturity of its powers, both for good and for evil; the good will be strengthened, the evil will be made more resolute and determined, and all the passions more lively and vigorous. Among these faculties, the memory will bear its part in the way of influence. This astonishing power of the human mind is susceptible of almost illimitable degrees of strength now; some possess it to an extent that is almost incredible; certainly astonishing. By its mysterious constitution we very frequently find, that thoughts rise up that had been lost, not only for hours, days, weeks, months, but for years; a circumstance which renders it not impossible nor improbable, that the memory will be so strengthened when the soul shall arrive at its eternal state, that the whole series of its actions, of its words, of its motives, will again be revived; the history of the man's whole self be again brought before him, so that he will seem to be living through all that he did and all that he was, in that other state of existence. We are always, therefore, my brethren, sowing seed which is to spring up to be gathered in eternity: "Be not deceived; what a man soweth that shall he also reap: he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption;" while "he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." We are thus to live for ever,

as it were, with ourselves; and not only with ourselves as we are to be, but with ourselves as we now are.

I know not whether this thought has ever struck you, but it is a terrific one—we are mysteriously and wonderfully formed, and not less mysteriously and wonderfully placed. What, speaking of a lost soul, will he remember in another world? First, THE POSSESSIONS HE HAD IN THIS: "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted; and thou art tormented." Yes, all shall be recollected: the gains in business that this lost soul in perdition secured when he was an inhabitant of our world; his patrimonial possessions, his accumulations of wealth, his splendid mansions, his gay equipage, his sumptuous living, his retinue of servants, every thing that constituted his gayety and his grandeur, and all his pomp and circumstance. But what advantage will it be to have a voice perpetually saying to him throughout eternity, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things?" O the sting of that past tense, "thou *hadst*." Worldly possessions in hand, or in expectation, are generally a source of high gratification; but when alienated, when lost, when gone for ever, what consolation do they generally yield to him that possessed them? And this lost sinner will in many cases recollect by what dishonourable and dishonest means these possessions were gained. Successful fraud and villany, while the fruits of them last, evil as they are, yield a gratification to evil-disposed men: but when the fruits are all withered, and there is the bare, blighted, leafless, and fruitless tree of guilt that bore them, then what pleasure will it be to remember possessions? And even where there may be no guilt, where no guilt may have been contracted in acquiring possessions, yet to recollect possessions for which the man sacrificed his soul—O then for a man to recollect that his Bible, and his minister, were perpetually sounding in his ears the expression, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" He is then to recollect this very expres-

sion, and by his own experience, to stand convicted of the veriest folly that an immortal creature can commit—of sacrificing the immortal for the mortal, heaven for earth, things unseen and eternal for things seen and temporal! O to have a voice, whispering to the soul through eternity, as there was in the case of Esau, when he arose from the consumption of his transient meal, “This is the price of thy birthright;” to have a voice whispering in the soul for ever, “Thou hast sold the high possessions of eternal life and glory for gratifications and possessions that are now for ever gone!”

But there will be another kind of remembrance of those possessions; or, in other words, a remembrance of them connected with another idea; and that is, that they have all been spent upon a man's self. That property, granted to him to employ for the glory of God, and for the good of mankind, for the relief of misery, the instruction of ignorance, and the salvation of lost souls, had all been spent on himself, for his own gratification, and the aggrandizement of his family. Men will learn at the day of judgment, if they never learn before, that wealth is a talent to be employed for the good of man and for the glory of God; and then think what will be the feelings of the lost spirit, to look back on hundreds and thousands spent on his own gratification, and that of his family, and nothing, or next to nothing, spent for God, and for the good of society. And connected with this, it is to be recollected, that, in the present world, rich men are sometimes estimated in society rather by their wealth than by their virtue,—a very false standard of respect, but so it is; and that tribute is paid to a man's purse which cannot be demanded for his character. But think of that man having passed into the unseen world, to take his place among the meaner lost, and to be for ever hearing the taunt from pauper tongues, “Art thou also become even as we? For remember that thou in thy lifetime hadst thy good things, we our evil ones; we are both tormented together now.” O ye rich men, ye prosperous tradesmen, ye hoarding men, ye covetous

men, if such there be here to-night, do consider how soon you may be stripped of all that wealth, and go, a naked, peniless spirit, into eternity; and if you have not employed your wealth (as, if answering to the character I have just named, you have not) for the glory of God, eternally to hear this voice, “Thou hast had thy consolation, now nothing remains for thee.”

Secondly, **LOST SOULS WILL REMEMBER THEIR WORLDLY PLEASURES;** their routs and parties, their public and private entertainments, their lawful and unlawful gratifications, their scenes of revelry and seasons of mirth, their home-bred delights and their fashionable amusements. And will these things throw one ray upon the gloom of everlasting night? Will it blunt the thought of the worm that never dies, or mitigate the fearfulfulness of the fire that is never quenched? The poet has said, and every man's experience sustains the propriety and truth of the expression, “Of joys departed never to return, O how painful the remembrance.” Conceive of a man of title, and of wealth, and of family, and of enjoyment, suddenly arrested in the midst of his prosperity, by a power that he cannot resist, and hurried away to a dark damp cell, loaded with irons, and left with no other employment than the dreadful one of contrasting the scene that he has left with that to which he has been brought; but terrible, brethren, as the transition seems, that man's case is susceptible of hope; he may yet expect to be redeemed and restored to all that he has lost; if he be a Christian, if this is not within the range of his expectations, he may look to brighter scenes above, that will infinitely more than compensate for all this; or if he be not a Christian, he will look with something like consolation to the grave, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. But think of the votary of this world's pleasure, think of the man of fashion, think of the woman given up to little else than earthly delights, suddenly arrested in their career, and carried into eternity, away from all their pleasures, to a land where no sounds of mirth, no voice of

song, no note of music ever breaks upon the ear, where no pleasures of the turf, or of the field, are to be followed, where the card table and the theatre exist no longer, where the merry dance, and the concert of sweet sounds no more are to be enjoyed :

“ But darkness, death, and long despair,  
Reign in eternal silence there.”

O to look back on such a scene of delights for ever gone, of pleasures which had no connexion with the moral nature, and therefore no connexion with man's eternal destiny, except it be that dark destiny of lost and miserable spirits. My hearers, accuse me not to-night of the foul purpose of putting out the light of human joy in the abodes of men ; tell me not that I came hither to dash the cup of consolation from the lips of mortals, or to infuse the venom of melancholy into it. No ; I only speak of those pleasures which the word of God forbids, and which are put in place of those which the word of God exhibits. I tell you, that if you neglect and despise religion—I tell you, that if you are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God—I tell you, that if you are not renewed by the Holy Spirit, to taste that the Lord is gracious, and to have joy and peace in believing through Jesus Christ—I tell you, that if you are given up to the enjoyment of a worldly mind and worldly courses, this scene that I am alluding to awaits you. I am only stepping between you and pleasures that would weigh you down in that world where the sounds of pleasure are never heard. O brethren, there are pleasures presented to you, placed within your reach, which will fit you for pleasures which are for ever, for joys that exist through endless ages, at the right hand of God.

Thirdly, THE LOST S OUL WILL REMEMBER IN ETERNITY HIS SINS. The great multitude forget theirs now as soon as they are committed ; and any man that sets himself down to the task of counting the number of his transgressions, will find he is engaged in as hopeless a work as numbering the stars that burst on his view on a clear winter's night. There

are some sins, in the case of most men, which stand out with peculiar prominence from the rest. Perhaps, in the case of most of us, there are some that we cannot soon forget : God has forgiven them, but we can scarcely forgive ourselves. Is it possible to forget them ? We ought not to forget them ; the remembrance ought to go through life, for the sake of caution, for the sake of humility. David went back as far as his youth, and said, “ Remember not against me the sins of my youth.” It is thus the case sometimes with Christians : it is also the case with those who are not Christians ; they pass over a multitude of minor transgressions, but perhaps there are some sins they have committed, the recollection of which is painful to them, the recollection is ever rising up in their minds ; it occurs in the hours of silence, in the hour of midnight : sometimes in company, remarks are made by individuals who are altogether strangers, but whom they suppose are acquainted with their history, and they imagine what is said is an accusation of them ; and in reading, they meet with facts that throw their memories back on these transgressions. It is possible I am addressing some to-night of this character ; it is probable I am speaking to some to-night, who, in the hour of temptation, have fallen, and they have fallen grossly and grievously. Now all their peace is blasted, and all their self-respect is gone. O that they would forget that one sin ; O that they could hide themselves from the recollection of that one : O for some Lethæan billow to put away a remembrance so painful : they would be willing that the past should be one universal blank, if it could take away the remembrance of that sin. The sting remains ; and there is a wound in the conscience, festering and burning, which nothing can heal. Yes ; there is balm for that. Before I go on to the application of the idea, let me pause in the train of my thought and representation, to speak to the wounded conscience, of a physician even for that ; a balm, even, as I have said, for that deep wound ; the blood of Christ can cleanse even from that sin. God

saith, "I am willing to blot it out." Give not thyself up to reckless and hopeless despair; look to Him that was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities: Jesus Christ will receive thee, and forgive thee. But think, my hearers, if now it be so painful sometimes to look back on the past, what will it be in eternity, when all the man's sins will rise up in his view, and he must see them; when the voice that he hates, but cannot silence, will go over the catalogue, and be for ever sounding in his ears the sins that he hath committed, the sins of his youth. O think, for ever to hold fellowship with dark thoughts and guilty recollections; to find himself for ever and for ever in the company of his sins. And then, you know, all the sophistry by which the deceitful heart practises upon the mind of man will be detected; it will no longer be a doubt what sin is; it will no longer be a question whether it be a great and enormous evil, or a trifle. The lurid flashes of perdition will throw light on this subject, and for ever settle the question, that sin is an infinite evil: and then all excuses will be silenced, all pleas will be cut off, and the poor creature will come back to this tremendous reflection, "Sin is as great an evil as it was represented, and I stand without excuse in the commission of it." It is a fearful thing when it is said, God "setteth our sins in the light of his countenance;" it is not less fearful when we are told that he will set them in the light of our own countenance, and we shall see them.

Fourthly, THE LOST SOUL WILL RECOLLECT IN ETERNITY ITS MEANS OF GRACE, ITS OPPORTUNITIES OF SALVATION, ITS ADVANTAGES FOR OBTAINING ETERNAL LIFE. Children of the righteous, I speak now to you. Let recollection now begin: call to your remembrance, as you sit here, the advantages of a religious nature that you have enjoyed as far back as memory can carry you. You cannot remember the time when a mother began, even upon her knees, to teach your infant mind the principles of the Christian religion. You cannot remember the time when a father's hallowed voice in tones of prayer floated

to your early ear. You cannot remember the time when you began to hear of salvation through Jesus Christ, of heaven and hell. If there are children whose parents are such monsters as to forget the eternal welfare of their offspring, you had no such parents. You remember the books that were placed in your hands while yet at home, and the letters that were addressed to you when removed from the vigilance of a father's and a mother's eye. O the advantages you have enjoyed! Kept from the society of the wicked, and introduced to that of the righteous; by all that the most judicious, tender, and affectionate treatment could do, trained up for God. Now think of all this being in vain; and, if in vain, all this remembered in eternity, where the recollection can do you no good, but will aggravate your misery. And then think of the religious advantages of a public nature that you have enjoyed. Think of the ministers that you have heard. I speak now to the stated worshippers in this place. Whose bust is that? \* Whose monument is that? Who, by that silent stone, still speaketh, though he is dead to you? The man who, for half a century, here preached the glorious gospel of the blessed God, and who hath now ascended to his God to give in an account of his stewardship. O what addresses, public and private, you have heard from him! And think of the men he called around him to assist him. To say nothing of those who still live, think of those who are now with him for eternity in heaven. Think of the plain, and faithful, and thundering discourses of Theophilus Jones, who so soon followed his venerable co-pastor to his rest and reward, that, as it were by a double voice from the tomb, this congregation and another might be impressed. Think of the good, the wise, the peaceful, the judicious Mr. Griffin, who has within these last two months passed away to that blessed world to which he had been the instrument of elevating so many immortal souls. These men, and others that

\* Pointing to a monument with a bust of the Rev. R. Hill, recently erected behind the pulpit of Surrey Chapel.

have preceded them into the world of spirits, you have heard, and heard them, some of you, in vain. You will never hear them more. Yes, you will: they will preach to you still by the means of your own conscience; that memory, that mysterious faculty of yours, contains all their sermons; though now for a season the remembrance may be lost, the conscience will take them up again in another world—ay, in the world of misery, if you continue in unbelief, and preach them to you again. What subjects you have heard discussed by these men, and others, of the law and the grace of the gospel? They have knocked by their varied themes at every door of the heart; they have appealed to your hopes and fears: and yet in the case of many it has been in vain. Now then (I want still to give my subject a close bearing on the conscience)—now, I say, think what it will be, for a man who has lived and died and perished in unbelief, under the sound of the gospel, to spend eternity in counting sabbaths that were lost, and in hearing again sermons that were once heard, but heard in vain, and hearing them then when they are accompanied with no offer of mercy, no invitation to Christ—when they will only be heard as the knell of past opportunities of salvation, and the sinner will feel, that to have heard them, and to have heard them in unbelief, has increased his condemnation, and sunk him deeper in the bottomless pit.

Fifthly, THE LOST SOUL IN ETERNITY WILL REMEMBER ITS IMPRESSIONS, CONVICTIONS, PURPOSES, AND RESOLUTIONS, ON EARTH. And have not most that hear me, at some period or other, had these impressions, had these convictions? Have there not been moments when, by sermons you have heard, or afflictions by which you have been visited, or events that you have witnessed, or books that you have read, or hair-breadth escapes that have been granted to you, or the counsels of friendship—impressions of a superior nature have been made upon your mind? Were you not, for a season, made conscious of sin, made serious and thoughtful, led to take up the neglected

Bible, to pray, to hear sermons? You seemed setting out for the kingdom of heaven; the Spirit strove with you, and you seemed yielding to his influence; the cords of love seemed to encircle your hearts; you appeared to be about to be drawn by them: but as you approached the gate of life, you saw it was narrow, and you observed that the road looked difficult: there was some besetting sin that you had, and you could not give it up; there was some evil companion that solicited you, and you could not abandon him; you were ridiculed, and you had not courage to bear with opposition, and you had not firmness to encounter it; and, O melancholy spectacle, you were seen turning back, and walking the ways of God no more. Sometimes it is painful to you now to think of this, and you are ready to say, "O, that I had never heard that sermon; O, that I had never had those impressions; O, that those convictions had never taken hold of my heart! I cannot enjoy my sins as I once did; I am half spoiled for the world, though I am not a member of the church." Yes, and you know, that often the scene of festivity, in which others experience no interruption, is marred for you. Then think, young man, think what will be the case in eternity, when a voice shall say, "Son, remember thy impressions; remember thy convictions." O, what a victim of folly will you appear to yourself there; O, how will you curse that folly, that, when you seemed almost a Christian, when you seemed about to decide for heavenly glory, you suffered yourself to be drawn back. You will appear to yourself, or your conduct will appear, the climax of all folly and madness; to have begun to feel something of the importance of religion and of eternity, and then to have given it up, and through that eternity to have the mind thrown back upon these seeming beginnings of good things, with the recollection that they are lost now for ever!

Thus, my hearers, you see, that memory will then have a very important influence on the punishment of the wicked. Yes; if memory could be lost, half of hell could be lost with it: it is memory

that will give the sting to the second death. Let me, for a few moments, present the contrast to this. Memory will go with the righteous to their eternal abode, and it will open to them a source of pleasure not to be conceived. Standing on the summit of Mount Zion, they shall look down the winding path which led to the ascent, and observe every step that they have taken. True it is, that they will recollect that they also sinned: but it will be no tormenting recollection; it will bend them the lower before the throne of the Eternal, and as they sink, their joys will rise immeasurably high. Humility in a creature is bliss; and the more humility we have, the happier we are: and thus the very recollection of our sins in heaven will, by producing deeper and deeper humility, be no source of tormenting recollection. We shall be lost in adoring gratitude, and wonder, and joy, at the grace that pardoned and sanctified them. We shall remember all the history of Providence, and all the methods of grace, and the connexion of both: we shall recollect how God seemed following us through all the scenes of our existence, and so uniting them as that all things should work together for our good; we shall remember those sermons that produced the saving impression on our heart, and the names of the preachers that were the honoured instruments of thus doing good to our souls: all the hallowed scenes of piety, through which memory now so delights to travel, will be travelled over again in the celestial world; we shall again enjoy afresh those seasons, and those scenes of communion with God, which have now sanctified many a spot, and made it dearer to us than any other that can be found on the face of the whole world; we shall remember all those victories over sin, and self, and Satan, and the world, through which we were conducted by the omnipotent grace of our God: we shall remember all those seasons of conference and co-operation, which we spent in this world of ours, and then and there see the results of all that we now do for Christ, results which we cannot at present, in our partial ignorance, anticipate; we shall

remember all that others have done for us, in the way of good, and all the good that we have done to others, and shall ascribe all the glory to God; we shall see how all things work together for good; the connexion of events; the connexion of our history with the history of the world at large; and memory will be for ever connecting the past with the present—the eternal present—of another world. And thus to the righteous, “Son, remember,” will be a note of joy, which will for ever exhilarate and delight his heart.

Now, my dear hearers, let the preacher place before you, with all affectionate seriousness, for your decision, the question—Will you have your memory your friend in heaven, or your tormentor in hell? Do consider; consider this; it is no imaginary thing; it is what concerns you all; and therefore, do, to-night, decide. Remember now, *remember now*, your sins, and fly for pardon to the blood of Christ. Now the recollection will be beneficial; now the recollection will be the means of salvation. Go home to-night, remembering your sins, and fly for pardon to Christ. Remember the God against whom your sins have been committed; remember Jesus Christ, who waits to save you: remember your possessions, and consecrate them all to God, first giving yourselves to the Lord. Remember your pleasures, and sacrifice all that are sinful, all that are injurious to your soul's best welfare; and come to the possession of that pleasure which now is satisfying without being polluting; and it will be the commencement of endless felicity. Remember your opportunities; O they are all presented to you to-night: we speak not of them in the past tense; God *is here*, waiting to be gracious; Christ is here, in the fulness of his mediatorial grace, as the way to the Father; the Spirit is here, waiting to renew and sanctify your hearts; the Bible is here, to direct you in all those high, sacred and mysterious concerns; the ministers of religion are here, to help you in your flight from the city of destruction to the city and habitation of God; your parents, young people, are here, seated

by your side, perhaps, to-night, sending up many an earnest prayer on your behalf; and perhaps, almost turning upon you as the preacher goes on, not with the taunt of Abraham to the rich man, but with all the affection of a father's or a mother's heart, saying, "Son, remember." Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, ere the evil days come in which no place shall be found. Remember now your impressions, your convictions, your resolutions; call them to recollection. Perhaps there are some who have begun to lose them; O take them up again to-night; would God the preacher may have come up for this blessed purpose, of retouching and retracing some impressions that have almost vanished from the heart. O begin again to-night: take up again the resolution—"I will serve the Lord;" take up again the purpose of surrendering yourself to him, and becoming his for ever and ever. God grant that this may be the case.

In conclusion, remember—for it is the substance of the sermon—short and uncertain as is your existence in this world, your character is perpetually receiving here the stamp of eternity: and you are all, and always, and everywhere, and in all things, gathering those materials which must inevitably be the source of the most tormenting or the most felicitous recollections throughout eternity.

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### SCRIPTURE DIFFICULTIES.

#### NO. II.

It is a work of vital importance to reduce, as far as possible, both the number and the force of scripture difficulties; at all events, to show that, whatever is their number and their nature, there is not one that can fairly be construed into an invalidation of the primary claim, which revelation sets up for itself, of being the word of God. The departments of nature and of providence supply so many

analogous difficulties, and, in many respects, difficulties of a more mysterious and less tractable character, that, with any rational and consistent *theist*, the friend of revelation may soon bring the controversy to a close. Let the words of revelation be received as the production of that same Mind which gave being to the universe, and law to the rational intelligences, and then the congruity, in the nature and extent of the mysteries and difficulties, discernible in all the separate departments of his works, becomes rather a *scal of unity* than an argument of contradiction, and should be construed into an *identity* rather than into a *discrepancy* of authorship. It is to be admitted that there might be difficulties of such a nature as completely to cancel and set aside the claim to inspiration. It is not every difficulty or mystery, however, that can, even by infidels, be supposed to annul these pretensions: they seem, by the very effort of exaggeration, to be conscious that every difficulty, and every mysterious page in revelation, do not amount to a forfeiture of its claims. Hence the laborious artifices, the special pleadings, employed to magnify some of these hard places into absurdities, some into philosophical impossibilities, and others into a violation of the moral principles of human nature; and hence, too, the grosser and more vulgar artifice of construing the vices, or the occasional lapses of the leading characters of Scripture, to the discredit of revelation, or even of its author himself. Every degree of difficulty short of involving a contradiction to the perfections of the Deity, a violation of the law of reason, or the moral sense of conscience, may be consistent with inspiration, and may be perfectly congruous with all that can be known of God. If so much is shown, the Deist is left without excuse, and his infidelity involves him in the charges of inconsistency and absurdity.—*Benson.*

## SERMON XII.

### THE SUFFERINGS AND TRIUMPH OF CHRIST.

BY THE REV. R. S. M'ALL, A.M.

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"When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."—Isa. liii. 10, 11.

IN calling your attention to this interesting passage, there are three things which require to be noticed.

*First*, THE ASPECT IN WHICH THAT WORK IS HERE REPRESENTED BY WHICH OUR SAVIOUR ACCOMPLISHED HIS GREAT UNDERTAKING.

It is not necessary to make any apology for applying this passage to Jesus Christ. The most pathetic of all the prophets here places in our view the agonies which the Saviour endured on earth, in connexion with the glory that should follow. The passage teaches us,

That the sufferings of Christ were *expiatory* and *piacular*. No explanation can be given of them consistent with the character of God, but that he was punished by way of propitiation. "All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one of us to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." It reminds us also,

That his sufferings were *voluntary*. The words would more properly be rendered, "when his soul shall make an offering for sin." Intimating that he suffered, not by the agency of another, but of himself. Also,

That his sufferings were *most intense and awful*. Reaching to the bottom of his soul; overwhelming him with horror and dismay. "The travail of his soul." The expression implies, extremity of toil and labour—active and energetic suffering—a struggle with conflicting tendencies—the utmost agony of spirit—a con-

flict where the meekness and humility of the man were mingled with the might and majesty of the Godhead. We sometimes form not only an inadequate judgment of these sufferings, but one which is not sufficiently practical in its tendency; because we do not connect as we ought the union of the two natures, in our own meditations upon this subject. The divinity of the sufferer extracts from our sympathies. We know, indeed, that the divine nature did not suffer, but this did not prevent him from feeling all that he was capable of feeling as man. It only made him more capable of feeling, and added to the poignancy and intensity of his sufferings.

He had a spirit unequalled for sensibility and affection, and keenness of feeling. To form a just conception of his sorrow, we must unite the ideas of compassion for the grief of the distressed, and horror at what was cruel and unjust; of indignation at the oppressor, and pity for the oppressed; of a wish to deliver the guilty, and an abhorrence of their sin. We must connect all the iniquity which he witnessed, and all the knowledge he had of the human heart. We must think of all the wickedness, the hardness of heart, the unbelief, the depravity, the unholiness of man; to give us a just idea of his sorrow. All his days were grief; his whole life was a pilgrimage of wo. Good men have always felt keenly the wickedness and distress of others. Paul was filled with indignation when he saw a city wholly given up to

idolatry. Elijah was filled with grief at beholding the wickedness of Israel. Jeremiah wept abundant tears for his sinful country. But what were the emotions of the soul of Jesus when he saw men abandoned to the evils of their nature! What distress must he have felt as he passed through cities wholly abandoned to crime! If his approach to Jerusalem caused him to shed tears, how abundant must have been the tears he shed over a lost world! Add to this the fearful preparations for his death—the malice of his enemies—the fears of his friends—the false-heartedness of the traitor who was about to deliver him to his foes. All was fully anticipated by him. He longed to enter on his sufferings, yet trembled at the idea of what he had to encounter. “I have a baptism to be baptized with,” said he, “and how am I straitened till it is accomplished.” But when the hour actually arrived, what must have been his feelings? Well might he exclaim, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death!” He beheld all, overpowered with terrific grandeur. He well knew how heavy was that burden of wrath which his Father was about to cause to fall upon him. He saw the sword undrawn, and felt already the keenness of its edge. When he hung upon the cross, the angels of heaven and the spirits of the deep all beheld the conflict with suspense. Even inanimate creation felt a pause. And not till his sacred head had fallen helpless on his bosom—not till his eyes were closed—not till his blood was cold, and his whole frame stiffened, did the earth cease to tremble, the sun come from his darkness, or the graves cease to put forth their dead. But then, nature resumed her wonted appearance. O had he sunk in that awful hour, where had been the hopes of guilty men! how changed had been the aspect of this auspicious day! What then had been our doom! Where then would have been those songs of praise which now fill every heart with joy! What hopes and feelings should we now have cherished amidst the blackness and darkness of eternity!

But what resolution was required!

What was required to have still wished the welfare of those by whom he was deserted! To have felt the scorn of his impotent but implacable foes! What must he have felt when a rude hand smote him—when he was bound—when they railed on him in mockery, and bowed the knee before him—when they gave him gall to drink—when they bade him come down from the cross—when even the thieves reviled him! O what was then required to go as a lamb to the slaughter, to bow with meek submission, to be dumb as a sheep before its shearers! But all this was little compared with the last act of his spirit, when he offered himself as a sacrifice for the sinful.

We know nothing of the nature of this sacrifice; but this we know, that it was an act of amazing energy, of strenuous labour. It was not submission merely; it was a direct and positive consecration of his whole being; as if he would place himself on the altar, and become himself the sacrificing priest. This was “*the travail of his soul.*” True, it was mysterious; but while it serves for the salvation of the redeemed, it is enough; and it shall be progressively unfolded in glory.

Let us notice,

*Secondly, THE SUBLIME AND HEAVENLY SATISFACTION ARISING TO THE REDEEMER IN CONTEMPLATING THE EFFECT OF HIS SUFFERINGS.*

*It is the pleasure arising from the expectation of success.* Compared with this, all the charms of wealth and fame sink into insignificance. This cheers the loftiest spirits under all they are called to suffer. It is greatest in the greatest minds. This idea was habitual to Christ, and it sustained him amidst all his sufferings and sorrows. “He for the joy that was set before him endured the cross,” &c. And it is this which still cheers him; for it yet remains to be fully realized. “He sat down on the right hand of God after he had offered one sacrifice for sins; from henceforth expecting, till his enemies be made his footstool.”

*It is the pleasure of the most pure and exalted benevolence.* By the kind and merciful appointment of our Maker, we

are made to feel pleasure in removing that which causes pain. What an ecstasy of delight is felt when we have unbarred the dungeon of the prisoner, and burst the fetters of the slave. How great, then, must have been the joy of the Saviour, when by his sufferings he changed the sounds of deepest misery into sounds of unspeakable joy. See him when he ascended up on high, "leading captivity captive, and receiving gifts for men, even for the rebellious." The heavenly powers crowd around his chariot; they mark his honourable scars; the crown of thorns is exchanged for a diadem of glory; the reed for the sceptre of omnipotence; scoffs and revilings for adoration and triumph! All but *his wounds* are changed; all but the marks of laceration! These remain; and they show that he has turned the weapon upon himself. Behold him upborne before the Ancient of days! The kingdom divine is given him—a kingdom that shall not pass away! And now, what can be added to all this? What more can be enjoyed? It is not the undissembled, the unanimous acclamations of angels; nor, which is above all this, the decided approval of his Father, which constitutes his sublimest satisfaction. No; he looks for something more suitable to the ample benevolence of his soul. It is to behold a renovated universe made to share his honours; it is to see the souls for whom he suffered brought to the possession of his glory.

*It is such satisfaction as springs from the great importance and difficulty of the event brought to an accomplishment.* I speak not now of the way in which salvation was purchased; but of the way in which it is applied—of the way in which the sinner is brought from the bondage of corruption, into the liberty of the sons of God. Even when the individual has been blessed with a pious education, and all around concurs to make him pious; and the work of salvation goes regularly on, till it ends in the joys of heaven; even in such a case, how great are the difficulties it meets with from within; how fearful the opposition encountered! how great

the change effected! how mighty the consequences involved! But how much greater is this work where the understanding is darkened—where the conscience is seared—where the whole life, with all its plans, is polluted—where the man seems as if the brand of perdition were already stamped upon his forehead, and the chains of darkness were already wrapped around him, and as if the adamant spell were never to be broken! How awful is the state of the infidel—of the blasphemer, &c. And how mighty must be that influence by which these are renewed! But the change ensues—the most inveterate habits are loosened—the chains are broken. A mighty hand has loosened the bonds; the prison door is opened; light penetrates the recesses of the dungeon; sounds of peace are heard; and the captive lifts his eyes to heaven in transports of joy! And what must be the joy of the Redeemer while the redeemed soul passes from darkness and enters the light of God! The curse is cancelled; the sentence of condemnation is erased; the doom of eternity is reversed! Hell trembles! and heaven exults with acclamations of triumph!

This satisfaction is to be estimated only by considering the knowledge of all this which the Saviour possesses. We only know the process and its effects, in part, both as to ourselves and others. But the whole is fully known to him. Could we but look within, and see the opposition of principles; the struggles of corruption; the conflict with the powers of death. Could we witness the effect of the first kindling ray of light; could we see the change produced by the new and spiritual creation, and the beauty which is not soon to fade, but to flourish for ever, we might then have some better conception of the mighty operation. But he sees the whole, from the first germ, to the period when mortality is swallowed up of life. He sees all, from the first sigh, to the triumphant song of praise. To him, the darkness of the abyss of wo and the unutterable joys of heaven are ever present. He is fully aware of the torments of the damned, which know

no alleviation, and which time cannot exhaust; and also the joys and bliss of heaven, which shall run on for ever!

*It is satisfaction arising from the peculiar relation of his character and work, to the event itself, and all its consequences.* With what satisfaction did the apostles, confessors, and martyrs, rejoice in the success of their labours, in the result of their toils, and especially in the last scene of their lives when they closed their eyes in blood! With what joy do the friends of this institution, who have struggled with so many difficulties, now see the fruit of their labours! The slave of Demerara, the wanderer of Africa, and the superstitious Brahmin, now join in the songs of the redeemed. But he sees all: he knows all his converts, and he is not ashamed to call them brethren; his affection for them is intimate, and his joy in their salvation is great. And it is all the result of his death and agonies alone. In the last scene of his life, when the Christian is about to go to his reward; yea, when the crown is placed upon his head, and he is arrayed in the garments of joy, what is the source of his exultation? He fixes his eyes on the countenance of the Redeemer, and all the glories of heaven are lost in the bright vision of Christ and his glory. And these emotions of joy will be reciprocal. The Saviour will delight in his people, and his people will delight in him. O think of the period when they shall all be collected! When heart shall be joined to heart, all holy as angels, all filled with the fruits of righteousness and peace! This will be the consummation of his joy. Then his triumph will begin; then his joy will be complete; then not one effort will be unblest, not one wish uncrowned! This leads us to consider,

*Thirdly, THE CERTAINTY THAT THIS SALVATION SHALL BE FINALLY REALIZED.*

The connexion of this passage furnishes our

First Argument. The sufferings of Christ are assumed as the basis of this assurance, and lead us to observe *the natural and inherent attraction of this doctrine.* The inseparable and certain

influence of his atonement forms the chief doctrine of the gospel. Indeed, it may properly be called the gospel itself; it is this which makes it glad tidings. Separate from this, the doctrines of immortality, of the resurrection, of judgment to come, &c. are all sources of dismay and horror. Tell me not that the record of my crimes shall be brought before God; that the trumpet of the archangel shall summon me into the presence of my Maker! But tell me how my sins may be blotted out, and my crimes for ever wiped away! Tell me this, and I shall listen to the sound of the trumpet with joy, and it shall be to me the tidings of purity and heaven. Whether we investigate the character of God, his holiness, his immutability, his eternity; or the character of man, his wickedness, weakness, and helplessness; or the character of Christ, his humility, his cross, or his glory; they all refer us to this doctrine, and it is this which gives them all their interest and glory. Beside, there is no other doctrine so truly Christian. The heathen, indeed, believe that some expiation is necessary; and the very nature of the sacrifices they offer implies that there should be a relation between the sacrifice and the nature of the persons who have sinned. But never has the removal of the guilt of sin been represented as the design of Deity, and not as the wish of the sacrificer himself; never has the victim been represented as provided by God, and not by man, and that victim an object infinitely dear to him; and never has that sacrifice been represented as efficacious, and as an object to be confided in. The whole range of thought, and all the annals of history, furnish no such scenes of humility and grandeur, as are associated in the hall of Pilate, the sorrows of the garden, and the ignominy of the cross. Other systems agitate, alarm, appal; this soothes, ravishes the soul, excites the obedience of love, and the ardour of hope. This makes the system apart from all that is human; the very conception is as singular as it is sublime. Other founders of religion, though many of them sagacious, appealed not once in their whole history

to that which forms the strongest, the simplest of all our feelings, the principle of sympathy and love. Now, the gospel is calculated to excite these in the highest degree. By this means it is not only adapted to us, but is proved to be the design of Him alone who knows the heart. This ensures its universality, its acceptance among all mankind, wherever there is grief to be consoled, or sin to be forgiven.

But this certainly arises,

2dly, *From the tendency of the gospel to an unlimited and ceaseless diffusion.* We may here refer to the first periods of Christianity. (The apostles submitted to loss; they yielded to what was imposed upon them; they counted not their lives dear to them; they were content to be poor that they might bring the tidings of unsearchable riches to others. They esteemed themselves nothing; their work engaged all their thoughts; the miseries of the world absorbed them; a desire to save that world influenced them with an ardour which nothing could abate; and this was all the reward they sought, that they might make known to those by whom they were doomed to death, the tidings of salvation and joy.) Holy men! day-stars from on high! It is to them, under God, we owe all our means of grace—the principles and hopes of Christianity—all that gladdens mankind—all that causes happiness in this world, or in that which is to come. This gave rise to missionary exertions; but the principle before was unknown. (In the gospel we see every thing calculated for extension. Its faith is simple; its doctrines are easily apprehended; its rites are few; its sacrifices are unbloody; its promises are joy and peace; its duties are practicable; it hopes are unspeakably bright. The character of the gospel, therefore, is favourable to universal diffusion; it has been, and it will not cease to be employed with the greatest effect, till the necessity for employing it shall be done away.

But the spirit of missions is not only one principal feature of the gospel; it is peculiar to that system alone. Men who have embraced even corrupt forms of

Christianity have done much, but there has never been even the attempt by the abettors of false religions. They have founded no missions, they have made no efforts to effect the happiness and salvation of mankind. Other systems may have forced themselves on the attention, and their principles may have been enforced by the sword and by blood; but the gospel alone has been propagated by peace and love. When was it ever heard that the abettors of the pagan religion endured trials and sufferings to propagate their system? Where are the graves of their reformers and missionaries, who aimed to do good, and died in the attempt? When has the Brahmin or the Hindoo ever traversed our shores, in order to convert us to the belief of the Sanscrit, and the worship of their divinities? (We have heard, indeed, of the efforts of infidelity to subvert Christianity; but what sacrifices have they made to do this? Where are their missionaries?) Why, with all the love which they profess for men, and their rooted enmity to all superstition; why do they not seek to weaken and remove the superstitions which have so long held Tartary and China in bondage? Why, seeing they are so very benevolent, do they not seek to clothe the naked Indian? And with all their zeal for peace and amity, why do they not seize from his grasp the tomahawk and the scalping knife, and prevent the recurrence of murder and of bloodshed? They tell us of their love of freedom—of their abhorrence of priestcraft—of their contempt of all that is denominated religion; let them look, then, at native savages, and try to benefit them. What! are they not men? Why, then, do they not pity them? Why do they not seek to elevate them to the rank of men? Why do they not aim to exalt them by science and by truth? Are they not bending under the yoke of bondage and oppression? Then, why do they not attempt to liberate them? Is there among them no juggling, no priestcraft? Among them, then, let these men exert themselves! I will not ask, what have they *done*? What have they *attempted*? (What trials have they en-

dured? What sacrifices have they made? Where are the monuments of their martyrs? Where is the print of their feet upon the desert? Where have been seen their attempts to relieve the perishing, to succour the distressed? No, brethren; these are not the triumphs of such men. It is not thus they have chosen to display the result of their principles. No; this praise is at once given up to us; these labours belong to the very men they malign. This is the very department of Christianity; and those who possess it will aim at its universal diffusion.)

3dly, *From its conferring, wherever it is embraced, the greatest temporal advantages in connexion with its spiritual benefits.* (That which philosophy aimed in vain to accomplish, Christianity has done. Idolatry is at once destroyed by its influence. It teaches the barbarian to seek another's benefit, instead of smiling at the reeking knife and the warm blood of a human victim. Instead of revenge and blood, it breathes peace and affection. Additional loveliness is given to the scenery of nature. The swamp is exchanged for the rural village. Towns and cities rise, and temples and palaces glitter in the waste. The ships of commerce are seen in places which were once desolate; and savages are converted into men. Observe what missionaries have accomplished; what civilization they have introduced; what sanctity has been added to the dearest ties of nature, by religion. See how Christianity has turned carnage and war into peace and gentleness. See what it has done for children, striving, like the prophet in the wilderness, to "make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Who does not from all this anticipate a complete triumph? It shall surmount all difficulties, till it sits enthroned in triumph over all mankind.) If all this is seen more fully in the islands of the South sea, it is only because it is there seen and felt at once in its influence on a whole people; because it is there brought into full display. But what it has done there, it has in fact done in every country now called Christian, through the instrumentality of men who have not left their

names behind them. (It has made this land the cherished abode of freedom, the centre of the arts, the nursery of benevolence, the Pharos of the world.)

4thly, *From its amazing progress.* What the gospel has to do is not more than it has effected. No enemy remains to be conquered which has not already been vanquished. We hope, indeed, for nothing from the agency of men; but for every thing from the omnipotence of God. When at first the whole Roman empire was confederated for its destruction, it rose triumphantly over all. When all the learning of Greece conspired to counteract it, it overthrew their boasted philosophy. The disputers of this world, with all their commanding eloquence, were unable to resist the authority of the gospel. The marble effigies of their heroes and gods, together with the temples that contained them, have crumbled away, and left behind them little more than the memory of their names. What difficulties, then, can be presented to the spread of the gospel? Rome, imperial Rome, has passed away; and Greece, Corinth, and Athens, where are they? But the gospel shall triumph. It is not espoused by a few fishermen merely; it has taken deep root in all nations; and not in nations only, but in minds also. And what shall oppose it? We believe that there are vast masses of ignorance—that there is extensive desolation—that myriads are bound by the spell of an infernal agency; we remember the extent of Mohammedan superstition; we take all into the account; we confess that these things form a strong barrier to human efforts. But already the holy banners of the cross are seen waving on the citadels of Zion; even now we behold her pearly gates; already crowds inhabit her; and soon shall she be filled with all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues. No sophistry can be employed against her greater than that of Porphyry and Julian; no opposition more fierce than that of Nero and Caligula; no barbarism more rude than that of Scythia and Britain; no darkness greater than that of Esquimaux and Hottentots. Nothing can be brought against

it more formidable than has already been overcome. "The Lord of hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge.")

5thly, *From the promises of final success, and the encouraging appearances in the circumstances of the church in the present day.* We cannot contemplate these without humility and gratitude. We feel grateful that so much is doing, and yet we blush when we compare what we are doing with the efforts and zeal of its first promoters. Had we been imitators of the apostles, what prospects might not now have burst upon us! But other motives have actuated us. Theirs was a manly temper of mind, contemplating great and noble objects! But what is ours? Alas! though there are some honourable exceptions, they are, in general, what we should be ashamed to name, and even blush to feel. But it is better that the censure should fall on us, than on our cause. It is better that scoffs should be levelled at us, than at the declarations which assure us that it is not yet become what it is destined to be. (If we had been faithful to our commission, the difficulties would have long since rolled away. We rejoice that the apathy is removing; and that there are so many whose lustre is so great, that it is almost enough for our honour that we are their contemporaries.) There have been many missionaries; and there are others fired with the same ardour, and yearning with the same compassion over the souls of men, and longing for their salvation. By many of these I am now surrounded; many have borne the burden and heat of the day; in hope they have rejoiced against hope; they have been strong in faith, giving glory to God in seasons of darkness and difficulty. Being persuaded of the promise, they embraced it, though afar off, assured that what he had promised he was able to perform. And they would not relinquish what they have seen, for all the sleepless nights they have suffered, for all the privations they have endured. To such men as these, I am not disposed to address the language of censure. I would share in their zeal, and rejoice in their success. Still, what have we done? The spirit of the world

and of party have long been opposed to the prescribed will of God. These days, however, are passing away. (The church is roused from her lethargy; she has listened to the voice of Him who calls her to arise, to make the solitary places glad, to cause the wilderness to rejoice and blossom as the rose. And now, what may we not hope to accomplish? Formerly we had great hinderances; we had but few agents, &c. But now, thousands of our brethren share in our sympathies, stimulate us in our labours, assist us by their exertions, and rejoice in our success. An ordinary Christian may now effect what would have required the energy of the apostolic character in days that are passed away. When the world had long been in darkness, God raised up those master spirits, Luther, Zuinglius, Knox, &c.; and if their successors had followed up their efforts, the world had soon been enlightened. At such periods men are raised up, who might in other times have pined away in inactivity. We cannot estimate too highly the qualifications of a missionary; nor can we sufficiently rejoice that so many have been raised up. There may be services which require equal skill; there may be enterprises even more dangerous. But there are none which require such simplicity, such spirituality; none which take their colour so completely from another world. Here there is not the stimulus of earthly ambition; there is no compelling necessity to urge; no great consequences to be dreaded from drawing back. Here all is peaceful and solemn—all is voluntary and spontaneous—all is plain and simple, tending to one end. A single eye and a single heart is all that is needed. A Christian missionary is an honourable man; though he be mean in the eyes of the world, and scorned by some, he is a great man, the more illustrious for that very scorn. (The age of violence and of blood is gone; but the feelings which animated the martyrs are not extinct; they still glow in many breasts; the spirit of the martyrs is among our missionaries.)

(Missions are no longer to be regarded

as schemes of doubtful success. Their plans of operation are matured; their stations are determined; obstacles have yielded to their exertions; success has been afforded. Many have embraced the gospel; and their influence is extending like so many radii to every part of the circle. A wave offering is presented to the Lord, and the rich harvest will follow. The handful of corn sown on the top of the mountain, shall grow and become as the cedars of Lebanon; the little one shall become a thousand. A single pagan added to the church, becomes the pledge of millions; the foundation of the enemy's citadel is sapped, its strength begins to decline, and its fortresses shall be overturned. In one truly converted, we see a germ which shall vegetate, and fill desert regions; we see one who shall cause songs to be raised on account of myriads.)

(Light springs up. The gloom and darkness of ages has vanished. There is no error—no idolatry. The voice of tumult, and the trumpet sounding to war and bloodshed, is silenced. There shall be no sword bathed in slaughter. None shall invade by violence the property of his neighbour. Wasting and destruction shall no more be heard. The Sabbath of the world is come. Notes of joy shall arise from every part. The name of Christian shall be hallowed. Kings shall lay their sceptres at the feet of Christ. Legislators shall prevent evil, and not inflict it. Government shall show that they are but subordinate agents. The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ; and all things shall be put under his feet. His empire shall be the boundaries of the earth; and it shall be said of Zion, "Behold, thy God reigneth!")

(And now, brethren, what a variety of motives are here exhibited to animate us that we may extend to all mankind the benefits of the gospel salvation. Here all may find motives; here is a lawful sphere for ambition; here is ample room for the exercise of devotional gratitude. We were once involved in darkness and in guilt ourselves; and if we have been

redeemed; if we have obtained an inheritance among them that are sanctified; if we can look forward to the heavenly kingdom; we owe it all to the goodness of our God. What, then, shall we account it too much to suffer and to do? Here we may display the promptness of our obedience. For this is his command. All are under his control; some with and some against their will; some so as to enhance their reward, others so as to add to their misery. But how awful will it be to facilitate, like Pilate and Judas, the plans of salvation, which will have no influence on them at last! To which class of agents do you belong? How forcibly does this great cause appeal to our compassion. Myriads are perishing in sin and debased by crimes; seeking heaven by sacrifices of greater horror than the very crimes which they are to propitiate. See them hurried forward into eternity! A succession of immortal beings is ever on the march from one region of existence to another—from seen to unseen—from that which is probationary to that which is unalterable—from that which is finite to that which is infinite; a change to a world where their destiny is fixed for ever. Of these, how few have ever seen that light which is to direct their steps to the vast unknown state of existence; how few have heard the tidings of salvation! O that we could view this dreadful procession of souls to the tribunal of God! We cannot; but they are passing along, some to regions of wo, and some to bliss; some are pressing down to darkness: and others, from all they enjoyed in the world, are just about to have their light and joy shrouded in darkness for ever! And where is the minister of peace to guide them? Where is the Saviour to deliver, where the intercessor to plead for them? They die! but there is no eye to pity, no arm to save them. And shall we withhold instruction? We have the means; those means are sufficient, and are designed to be universal. O tell them of the sacrifice and blood of Christ—of the Lamb of God that takes away sin. Show them how they may enter by a new and living way into the holiest of all. Show

them how, though laden with sin, they may find admission. Show them the fountain in which they may be cleansed from all impurity. How they who are afar off may be brought nigh, be made kings and priests unto God, and be satisfied in his presence for ever and ever.)

These, brethren, are the motives by which we would excite you to a renewal of those exertions and contributions which you have been accustomed to render. I will not debase the subject by using any inferior motives; for where these are presented, he is dead to all generous feelings who can refuse. But I ask not that man's offering; I would have this cause served by willing Christian offerings. We plead not with skeptics. Our only real enemies are presumption and confidence; our only hope is perseverance, reflection, and prayer.

This society is confined within no narrow, party, sectarian views. It has for thirty years pursued its course. God has been pleased to bless its exertions, by causing whole nations to renounce idolatry, &c. Persevere in your course in proportion to the extent of your means; and supplicate the blessing and the grace of God. Grant me but this, and I have no more to ask; my end is answered, my success is sure.

Missions are services of toil, but we have not to share them. Other men have taken this toil upon them, and have hazarded their lives for the sake of Christ. Men whom no danger of the sea—no pestilence of clime, can divert from their purpose. We pledge ourselves to them that they shall not fail through the failure of our pecuniary supplies; that we will not permit them to perish of hunger, of cold, or of nakedness in a strange land.

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### SCRIPTURE DIFFICULTIES.

#### NO. III.

THE difficulties which are met with in the understanding of the Scriptures, arise from various causes: to point out some of these causes is the object of the present paper.

1. When we take the Scripture into

our hands, we should remember that it contains the revelation of God to man; and it may naturally, therefore, be expected to include many things beyond man's understanding, and to discourse of many subjects both novel and mysterious.

2. The greater part of these writings was composed to serve a present purpose; and, unless we enter into that purpose, and are prepared to follow the argument, we must of course fail to comprehend the writer.

3. As these books are of extreme antiquity, they of course refer to customs, facts, persons, places, prejudices, and opinions of antiquity; many of which have long since died and been forgotten—unless we recall them to mind, the reference will be unintelligible.

4. The books which we are concerned to understand do not come to us as they were written. Their original languages are not generally understood, and we read them in all the disadvantages of a translation. This translation may be imperfect, or its expressions may have become obsolete; and, in some cases, the learned authors may have mistaken the sense of their originals.

To one or other of these sources, may most of our difficulties be referred.

And we apprehend that any one of such difficulties is, to a common reader, insurmountable. (1.) If it arise from the profound mysteriousness of the theme, even the largest and most cultivated mind may fail to comprehend it. And much more he, who is little accustomed to intellectual exertion. (2.) Difficulties which rest in the line of argumentation and proof employed, or in perceiving the end and object of the writer, are not likely to be solved without some illustration and help from others. (3.) Allusions, and figurative diction, do absolutely require literary and classical explanation. (4.) Obscurities in the English words, or misconceptions of the meaning, from which no man or men can be safe, cannot be remedied but by the aid of superior learning, such as we can only come at by the help of books. On all which accounts, the English reader of the Scriptures must sometimes feel his loss; and

without the means of applying to books, he will be helpless. These books are often costly, and often useless to the persons who most need their help. Hence the duty of the public teachers of religion giving their attention to clear up in some measure the difficulties the people may find. And hence one instance of the necessity of a standing ministry, to which reference may be had for information.

We now proceed to adduce a few examples of each kind of difficulty already mentioned.

1. Difficulties necessarily resulting from the nature of the subject.

The sacred writers being inspired to speak of the unseen world, of eternal objects, of the invisible and infinite God, are in the situation of Paul after he had been in paradise: he found himself unable to express what he had seen and heard so as to make himself understood. 2 Cor. xii. 4. Dan. xii. 8.

When they speak of God, it cannot be but that their language should be sublime and obscure, beyond our full comprehension. Exod. iii. 13—15. Does any man understand this? Job xi. 7, 8.

When they speak of the Son of God, human language is not adapted to express the subject, and human understandings cannot fully know it. John i. 1—5. Matt. xi. 27.

The being and attributes of the Holy Spirit are beyond our thoughts. John iii. 8.

The unseen world — heaven — hell. Rev. xxi. &c.

These are things which never can be perfectly understood, at least in this life; but still they are more likely to be somewhat illustrated, when we borrow all the light and information which good and wise men, who have diligently studied, can give us.

2. Difficulties which result from the nature of the argumentation.

For instance, if we read an answer to some inquiry, we shall have difficulty in understanding the answer, unless we know what the question was. If we read an argument, it will be much more intelligi-

ble, if we know what the writer wishes to prove. Now, sometimes this is not so readily discovered. Many examples in the book of Job, ix. 22—24; in the Psalms, xl. xlv. xlix.; in the Prophets, Isa. xxi.; in the Epistles, Rom. iii. 2. Cor. i. 17—23. 1 Thess. iv. 15.

We may observe, by the way, from these latter instances, in the Epistles of Paul, how little credit is due to those enemies of Christianity, who would have us suppose, that the early believers were weak silly enthusiasts,—the letters written to these people show, that they must have been men of good sense and sound understanding, or they never could have understood them.

3. Difficulties arising from the facts and customs alluded to.

CUSTOMS.—Ps. cviii. 9. Josh. ix. 4. Matt. ix. 17. Acts xxii. 25.

PERSONS.—Acts xxiv. 25. Felix and Drusilla. 2 Tim. iv. 16, 17. 1 John ii. 18—22. 2 John 7. 9. Antichrists.

PLACES.—Ps. cxxxiii. 3. Comp. Deut. iv. 48.

OPINIONS.—Eph. iii. 5, 6. Matt. xii. 24.

ADAGES.—Matt. xxi. 21. 2 Cor. xiii. 2. Matt. xix. 24. Jer. xiii. 23.

4. From an imperfect, mistaken, or obsolete translation.

IMPERFECT.—Gen. xiv. 22. 2 Kings iii. 11. Isa. lviii. xxxii. 10. Ps. xxxvi. 9. Heb. iv. 5; iii. iv.

MISTAKEN.—1 John iii. 16.

OBSELETE.—2 Cor. viii. 1. 1 Cor. iv. 4. Gen. xlv. 6.

It is our consolation to remember, that no one article of our faith stands affected by these difficulties. They leave the foundation of our hope immovable. The grace of Christian charity depends not on the decision of controverted questions. It is only our knowledge or desire of knowledge, that is hindered or mortified. Knowledge is power. And as the same great author has well said,—It was the desire of power in excess that caused the angels to fall—it was the desire of knowledge in excess caused man to fall; but in charity is no excess, neither can men nor angels come in danger by it.

## SERMON XIII.

THE WORSHIPPERS IN THE HEAVENLY TEMPLE.

BY THE REV. CHARLES BRADLEY.

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*"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple."*—Rev. vii. 14, 15.

THE figure under which heaven is represented to our view in this vision, is that of a temple, crowded with worshippers, and resounding with praises. The man who loves the tabernacles of the Lord as the saints of old loved them, will view this representation of his future residence with peculiar interest. There are, indeed, seasons in the life of the established Christian, in which the prospect of this heavenly temple brings to his heart a peace and a blessedness, which pass all understanding. While his soul, in the secrecy of retirement, is rising on the wings of faith to the footstool of its God, the veil, which conceals eternity from his sight, seems to be drawn aside, and heaven, with all its glories, opens to his view. He beholds the splendour of the heavenly house, he hears the songs of its redeemed inhabitants, and deems himself already a partaker in their joy.

Would we, my brethren, enter into the Christian's secret, and share his honours and his happiness? Our affections must first be fixed where his are fixed, on things above. We must have a treasure in eternity, and our conversation must be in heaven. Let us, then, this very hour, strive to elevate our minds to the dwelling place of God. While seated in this earthly house of prayer, let us lift up our thoughts to that glorious temple above us, in which all the triumphant church are at this very moment assembled and pouring forth their praises. There dwells the Saviour, who is all our salvation and

all our desire; there live the Christian friends, who were once dear to our souls on earth; and there, if we are the redeemed of the Lord, when the days of our tribulation are ended, will be our own eternal home. O, may we all one day enter that house of rest! May we all love to fix our thoughts on it now, and contemplate its blessedness! May we often experience, within these walls, a foretaste of its joys!

The representation which the beloved disciple has here given us of the happiness of the heavenly world, suggests these four subjects for our consideration:—a temple, the worshippers in this temple, the nature of their worship, and the privileges they enjoy. We shall, however, find sufficient matter for our present meditation, if we confine our attention to the two former of these subjects.

I. Let us consider, *first*, THE TEMPLE HERE SPOKEN OF. It is a heavenly temple, a holy place, not standing on this perishable world, but having its foundations laid on the everlasting hills of heaven. All other temples have been erected by man, but this temple has been built by Jehovah himself, to be the eternal dwelling place of his beloved church, and the seat of his own glorious throne. He dwelt, indeed, figuratively in the temple at Jerusalem, and had the chambers of his priests surrounding him on every side; but he dwells visibly in this heavenly house, and is gradually collecting within its walls all the countless myriads of his saints, and

will make them for ever ministering and rejoicing priests around his throne.

Where this temple is, we know not. We are, indeed, taught to consider heaven as a state, rather than as a place; but we have reason to conclude, from several passages of Scripture, that there is some portion of the universe set apart to be the palace of its great King; that there is within the boundaries of the creation some glorious world, where Jesus in his human form now lives and reigns, and where he will eventually assemble, with the innumerable company of angels, all the sinners of mankind whom his blood has purchased.

All that we know of this world is, that it really exists, and that it is a world of purity and peace. Our Bibles, indeed, tell us something of its glories, and more than our limited capacities can fully comprehend; but still, the most glowing descriptions that language can convey, and the most exalted conceptions to which our imaginations can reach, fall infinitely short of that dazzling splendour which fills the courts of the living God. The world which we inhabit, though defiled by sin, and under the curse of God, has yet so much order, beauty, and magnificence in it, that we are often delighted and astonished as we contemplate its scenes. What, then, must be the glory of that world which has never felt the polluting touch of sin, which was prepared, before the foundations of the earth were laid, for the thrones of the redeemed, and adorned for a full display of the Almighty's unclouded brightness? Happy are they who dwell in such a temple! Blessed is the man who is but a door-keeper in such a house!

II. THE HAPPY BEINGS WHO ARE THE WORSHIPPERS IN THIS SPLENDID TEMPLE ARE DESCRIBED IN THE PASSAGE CONNECTED WITH THE TEXT, AND OUR SECOND SUBJECT OF CONSIDERATION LEADS US TO TURN OUR ATTENTION TO THEM.

Who, then, are these rejoicing worshippers, and whence came they? Many of them are natives of this heavenly world, and have been for countless ages ministering servants in this house. These are described, in the eleventh verse of this

chapter, as standing round about the throne, and falling before the throne on their faces, and worshipping God. But these are not the worshippers referred to in the text. There is another, and a more numerous class of priests, serving in this temple, singing another and a louder song, and occupying as honourable a place. "These are they, which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

I. This description reminds us, first, of the former condition of these worshippers. It tells that it was an earthly condition. They were not, like the angels, born in this house; they were natives of an apostate world, and had an earthly origin. The powers of their nature were once far less exalted than those of their fellow worshippers, and they were altogether incapable of sharing in many of their services. Their spirits were united to a frail body, a body of humiliation, taken from the dust of the earth, and rapidly tending to dust again.

Their condition, too, was a *sinful* one. Their great tribulation was brought upon them by the greatness of their sins. Not that they were more sinful than the other inhabitants of the earth which they dwelt on, but they were once as much encompassed with infirmities as any of their brethren, as dead in trespasses and sins. There is not one among them who was not a transgressor while on earth, and who has not to this very hour a remembrance of his guilt. It is this remembrance which makes their gratitude so fervent, and their song so loud. It is this which draws from them so exalted a hymn of praise, that the angels cannot reach its strains, and are forced to wonder at its sweetness.

They were also in an *afflicted* condition. Not a single sorrow nor care now enters their hearts, yet they were once in "great tribulation." Many of them came out of a state of peculiar distress and sufferings. "They had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, were sawn asunder, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted,

tormented. All of them were in some degree men of sorrows. They were as well acquainted with poverty and want, anxiety and care, as we are now. Their bodies were as weak and liable to pain and sickness as our own. Their houses of mourning were as frequent and gloomy, and their graves as dreary and cold.

It was the same with their spiritual troubles. They felt, at seasons, the same painful and suspicious fears that we feel; they were assaulted by the same temptations, stricken by the same arrows, and forced to struggle with the same enemies. Not a single temporal or spiritual sorrow can ever enter into our hearts, which has not been a thousand times felt, in all its bitterness, by these rejoicing inhabitants of the heavenly world.

2. Such was the original condition of these worshippers; it was an earthly, a sinful, and a suffering one. Let us look, secondly, at *their present condition*. Here, however, our knowledge again fails us. We know what it is to be sinful and afflicted creatures upon earth, but we do not know what it is to be holy and rejoicing beings before the throne of God in heaven. In this far distant world, we can neither see all the glories of the temple above us, nor enter into the full meaning of its services. Some particulars, however, of the present condition of the redeemed saints are given us by the beloved disciple in this vision.

It is represented to us as a state of *peace*, a state of freedom from sorrow and from pain. They are *come out* of their tribulation; they have passed through it, and left it all behind. Their wearisome pilgrimage is brought to an everlasting end. They have exchanged an earth of labour and misery, for a heaven of peace and rest. The billows of adversity, which once filled their souls with fear, still roll on and rage; but they are rolling far beneath them, and can never again toss them with their waves. We deem it a mercy to be kept for a day, yea, for an hour, free from anxiety and sorrow; but some of these worshippers have not shed a single tear, nor been harassed by a single care, for ages.

Their state is also a state of *purity*.

“They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Without this washing, they could never have been admitted into the heavenly temple; for nothing that defiles has ever entered there. Even in that earthly house, which was built for the Lord at Jerusalem, his priests were constrained to wash in the sacred laver before they approached the mercy-seat, which was the symbol of his presence; and surely he will not admit one, who is defiled and unclean, to minister before him in his temple above. He that was so careful of the purity of his earthly house, will not suffer his heavenly mansion to be polluted.

The robes of these priests were once, indeed, defiled and stained by sin. Their garments were as mean and polluted as ours are now, and neither men nor angels could have cleansed them. Ten thousand tears of penitence could not have washed them white, nor the blood of martyrdom concealed their stains. How, then, was their filthiness removed? By the water of baptism? All these priests were indeed washed in this water, but it was not this which purified their souls. Daily experience proves that no outward means can remove the crimson stain of sin, or do away its filthiness. While we are contending that baptism has this power, thousands around us, who have been baptized in the name of Christ, are giving a death-blow to all our reasonings by their worldly and ungodly lives. This, as well as every other ordinance, is, indeed, sometimes made the means of communicating blessings to the soul; but there is no inseparable connexion between the outward visible sign and the inward spiritual grace of any sacrament. A man may go to the table of the Lord, and yet not discern the Lord's body there. He may be washed in the water of baptism, and yet be as much in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity as Simon Magus or Judas Iscariot.

Could we but once be brought, brethren, to see something of the real nature and extent of the depravity which reigns within us, we should that very moment be convinced that no outward ordinances,

no human exertions, can cleanse the soul from its pollution; that the evil is too powerful and too deeply seated to yield to such remedies as these. We should see that the matter will not admit, for a moment, of doubt or argument. Our feelings would at once refute the most subtle reasonings.

There is, indeed, a fountain which has power to wash away sin and uncleanness; but this is a spiritual fountain, possessing a spiritual and mighty efficacy. These heavenly priests have discovered this sacred laver, and in their songs they point it out to us. We find them always ascribing the change which has passed on them to one cause, and giving to one being all the glory. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." "They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;" that blood, which, the Bible tells us, cleanseth from all sin, and which can make the sinner's defiled robes as white as snow. "Therefore," says the text, "are they before the throne of God." This was the reason why the everlasting doors of the heavenly temple were opened to them, while thousands of their fellow sinners are for ever excluded from its courts—"they were washed, they were sanctified, they were justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

When once they had applied to this cleansing fountain, they were brought into a state of pardon and acceptance with God. "He blotted out as a thick cloud their transgressions, and as a cloud their sins." The guilt of their sins, strictly speaking, still remains on them. They still deserve, and ever must deserve, the wrath of God; but all their liability to punishment is completely and for ever done away; so entirely removed from them, that their reconciled God deals with them in heaven as though he remembered their sins and iniquities no more. In this sense, "He does not see iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel." God looks upon his saints as

criminals, but he views them in Christ as acquitted criminals, as beloved children; as having obtained, by an act of grace, a complete and perfect pardon, and received from him a title to richer privileges than their sin had forfeited. They were, indeed, continually contracting fresh defilement as long as they remained on earth, and were constrained to wash again and again in the same fountain that cleansed their robes at first; but if this fountain had left the unpardoned guilt of only one sin upon their souls, that one sin would have disqualified them for the pure services of the habitation of God, and have barred for ever its sacred doors against their entrance.

This free and full pardon of their sins is not, however, the only blessing which the heavenly worshippers have obtained through the blood of the Lamb. Had this been all, they could never have joined in the worship of the heavenly world, nor sung the songs of Zion. The same fountain that freed them from the guilt of sin, washed away sin itself, freed them from its reigning power, and put a new and holy principle within their hearts. Not that they were at once brought into a state of perfect purity. As the consecration of some of the Jewish priests was carried on for many days before it was completed, so the purification of these priests was a long and arduous work. Years passed away before some of them were completely sanctified, and made meet to minister among the saints in light; and they were all plagued to their dying hour, in a greater or less degree, with the struggling corruptions of their evil hearts. But sin could not follow them beyond the grave. As soon as their liberated souls escaped from this world of pollution, they entered a world where this enemy can never come; and all is now unsullied purity and perfect holiness. Their graces, which were so often obscured and sullied here on earth, now shine forth with unclouded brightness and never-fading lustre. "Christ," says the Scripture, "loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to

himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish."

We may observe, further, that the state of these worshippers in the temple of God is a state of *triumph*. The white robes, in which they are clad, are not their only ornaments. We are told in the ninth verse of this chapter, that they have palms in their hands.

The palm tree, among many of the ancient nations, was an emblem of victory. Hence its branches were used to adorn triumphal processions. The general, whose victories the triumph was designed to celebrate, carried a small branch of it in his hand, and was thus recognised as a conqueror. When, therefore, the redeemed are described as having palms in their hands, we are reminded that they were once soldiers, who were not ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, but fought manfully under his banner, and by the strength of his arm completely conquered every enemy. The saints on earth, indeed, are warring the same warfare in which these glorified beings were engaged, and are continually obtaining victories in it; but then they must wait till all the days of their warfare are accomplished, before they can have the triumphal chariot and the palm. The soldier never triumphs till the war is ended, and the enemy completely subdued. The saints in heaven have finished the painful conflict, and are now gone up for their reward to Jehovah's temple. And O what blessed triumphs are theirs! What glorious spoils! What everlasting shouts of victory and songs of joy! Their triumph is a never-ending triumph. Their palms will never wither. Their robes of honour will never fade. The lustre of their crown never can be tarnished. The light of day will be extinguished, and the stars of heaven be darkened, but the brightness of their glory will be as incorruptible as the throne of God.

3. As we look on these worshippers in heaven, we may observe, thirdly, *the greatness of their number*. They are said, in the ninth verse, to be "a multitude, a

great multitude, a multitude which no man can number."

But here it may be asked, Whence can this great multitude come? We read our Bibles, and we find the people of God spoken of there as a little flock. We look around us in the world, and are sometimes tempted to ask, Where shall a godly man be found? How, then, shall this great multitude be brought to glory? From what unknown globe has sovereign mercy fetched them? We dare not say, in answer to these inquiries, that all who are now rejoicing in the heavenly courts were once inhabitants of the earth on which we live. The benefits of redeeming grace may be as extensive as the boundaries of the creation. There is, however, every reason to suppose that the great multitude of saints who are spoken of in this vision, were originally strangers and pilgrims in this world of sorrow. It is true, indeed, that the way which leads from this sinful world to the heavenly mansions is represented in the Scriptures as extremely narrow. We see, too, that there are few walking in it. But it does not therefore follow, that the greater part of the human race descend by another road to another kingdom. Millions of the children of men are, we trust, carried yearly in their infancy to the realms of light, and many an aged saint also is seen patiently walking in the path which leads to God, and will soon be standing in his temple a rejoicing priest. Satan does not number among his subjects all the inhabitants of our globe. The Redeemer has a people on the earth. He is seeing of the travail of his soul in many places, and in a thousand hearts, though we see it not. Who can tell how many an humble Christian has been travelling to the land of rest, while almost all around him, and even the honoured instrument that first turned his soul to God, have been ignorant of his faith? The man has poured forth alone his prayers and tears. Men have not seen the uplifted eye, nor heard the secret prayer for mercy; but the angels of heaven have rejoiced over the weeping suppliant, and at length carried him in triumph to the

temple of his God. We know, too, that before the destruction of this world of sin, it will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ. A time is rapidly approaching, when the standard of the cross shall be erected in every land, and Jesus of Nazareth reign in every place. We need not fear being solitary inhabitants of the heavenly house. God has not built so splendid a temple to be the only blank in his crowded creation. We, and all around us, may make light of that voice which invites us to enter in; but still the marriage supper of the Lamb will be abundantly furnished with guests.

A review of the cheering subject, which we have thus briefly considered, leads us to observe, in conclusion, that *the gospel of Christ does not promise to its followers any exemption from the calamities of life.* It tells us that man is born to trouble, and that the servants of God shall have their full portion of the sorrows of mortality. The Bible does not attempt to cheat us into a profession of religion by false representations. It promises us happiness in heaven, and many joys in the road which leads to it; but, at the same time, it plainly tells us that this road is a path of trial. All the saints are, indeed, described as rejoicing; but, then they are said to be "rejoicing in tribulation." Their nearness to God has neither removed calamity from them, nor blunted their feelings when smarting under it. Who, then, are we, brethren, that some special exemption should be made in our favour? David, and Paul, and every other saint, have drunk of the cup of sorrow: why, then, should we expect it to be always kept from our lips? Have we deserved it less than they, or do we need it less? Have we fewer sins to be subdued, less pride, less self-dependence, less earthly-mindedness, to be rooted out? Tribulation is the portion of all the redeemed; and, if we have ever tasted of redemption, it will, in some shape or other, be our portion. Our Saviour tells us so. This is one of the first sayings he addresses to them who follow him, and one of the first truths he generally makes them feel the meaning of, "In the world ye shall have tribula-

tion." Let us, then, prepare to meet our promised trials, and not only to meet them, but to welcome them with cheerfulness and joy. They are designed to help us forward in our course, to lead us on in the road, which will take us to the temple and the throne of God. "Our light affliction," says one who had tasted of much severer sorrows than ever fell to the lot of any of us, and was quite as capable of forming a true estimate of their nature—"Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

There is another reflection suggested to us by the words we have been considering. *How great is the contrast between the present and the future condition of the followers of Jesus!* Those whom the apostle saw in this glorious temple are all said to have come out of great tribulation. They were, perhaps, some of the first and most persecuted members of the church. But what a blessed and wondrous change has passed upon them! They were once, perhaps, wandering about in sheep skins and goat skins; they are now clothed in white raiment, walking the streets of the new Jerusalem, and treading the courts of its splendid temple. They were once glad to fly for shelter to mountains, caves, and dens of the earth; they are now occupying everlasting mansions in Jehovah's house. Those heads, which are now encircled with crowns of glory, were once bowed down under a sense of guilt. Those tongues which are now shouting "Worthy is the Lamb," were once complaining of their wretchedness and sin. Those hearts which are now glowing with the most exalted happiness, and rejoicing in spotless purity, were once full of corruption and perplexity, and aching with cares and sorrows.

Has such a change as this passed on these once sinful and afflicted saints? And is there no change awaiting those who are now following the same Lord in the same path of tribulation? Shall they never exchange a world of suffering for a heaven of rest, a vale of tears for a mount of joy? O, look, my Christian brethren,

to that glorious army of martyrs, to that church of the first-born. See them on their thrones. Listen to their songs of triumph. Soon, very soon, shall you be numbered with them. Only tread in their steps; wash in that fountain which cleansed them; keep close to that Saviour in whom they believed; serve faithfully that God whom they loved and feared; and your robes shall soon be as white as theirs, your songs as joyful, your crowns as bright.

But the voice of consolation is not the only language that the Holy Spirit addresses to us in the text. Here is, lastly, *a loud call to self-examination*. This great multitude, brethren, may stand before the throne of God, and yet we may not be in their number. The gates of this heavenly temple may be opened to ten thousand times ten thousand ransomed sinners, and yet closed against us. There is another and a very different house, in which we may be forced to seek an everlasting home. There is the dwelling-place of Satan in eternity, as well as the temple of the living God. To which of these mansions, then, are we hastening? We must soon be lodged for ever in one or the other of them: which will be our habitation? Shall we be the ministering priests of Satan or of God?

If we obtain a faithful answer to such questions as these, we must not be content with referring to our present troubles, and drawing an inference from them that all will in the end be well. Tribulation, it is true, is the portion of the people of God; but it is also the portion of another and a more numerous people, the children of the wicked one. The severest afflictions prove nothing as to our spiritual state and character. We may be amongst the most wretched on earth; and yet, notwithstanding all our sufferings, we may be also amongst the most wretched in the world to come. We may resemble the glorified inhabitants of heaven in their former state of tribulation, and yet never be made partakers of their present happiness. The question to be asked is not whether I have been afflicted, but whether my afflictions have been sanctified afflic-

tions; whether, through grace, they have forced me to see my spiritual misery and wretchedness; whether they have made me feel the plague of my sinful heart, and led me to seek for help in a crucified Saviour; whether they have softened, changed, humbled me? The great question is, Have I washed in that fountain which God has opened for sin and for uncleanness, and have I been really cleansed there? Is the power of sin giving way, and the love of holiness gradually gaining strength in my heart? O, brethren, how few among us can bear to bring our profession of Christianity to such a test as this! We have no heartfelt sense of our spiritual pollution; we feel not our need of Christ; we desire not the washing of his blood. As for inward purity, purity of heart, we seldom think of it, and can hardly understand what is meant by it. But what is that hope of heaven worth, which is not accompanied with this inward purity? Does not the Scripture say, "He that hath this hope in him,"—a good hope of heaven,—“purifieth himself even as God is pure?” and do not your consciences testify that there is no communion between purity and you?

Dare not, then, in direct opposition to the word of God, to hope for heaven till sin is become hateful to your soul, and perfect holiness the first wish of your heart; till you have gone with a feeling, penitent, and believing heart, to the fountain which infinite mercy has opened for transgressors on the cross, and washed your defiled robes and made them white in its sacred water. This fountain is still standing open for sinners. The Redeemer's work of salvation is not yet completed. Though he has already carried innumerable thousands to his house, there yet is room, room for thousands more, room for you. Do you really desire to enter in? Have you but a willing and an humble heart? This is all a gracious Saviour asks. Take it to his cross. However polluted by iniquity, he will cleanse it there, and make you a pure and rejoicing worshipper for ever in the temple of your God.

## SCRIPTURE DIFFICULTIES.

## NO. IV.

LIKE all other ancient writings, the Holy Scriptures present many difficulties, some of which will defy every attempt at solution, while there are others which may be fully and satisfactorily removed by an acquaintance with general science. Nor should the circumstance that these difficulties present themselves in the sacred volume be permitted to excite any surprise, much less any distrust of mind, to those persons who may meet with them in the course of their reading. Let them only call to mind the fact, that the books of Scripture were written by different persons, in almost every variety of circumstance; that they refer to people whose customs and habits were totally dissimilar to our own; that they narrate histories of which we possess no other authentic documents, which might reflect light on some obscurity of expression or vagueness of description; that they were written in other languages than those in which we now possess them; and that, in addition to the mutability of language, must be added the difficulties of translating out of one tongue into another. Let all this be considered, which, indeed, is but a small part of the several circumstances which might be brought forward, and then we shall see the folly and unfairness of those who would urge the difficulties of Scripture as a reason why it should not be received as an authentic and inspired book; for it should be borne in mind that these difficulties are almost exclusively confined to matters of an *historical* nature; not affecting, even in the remotest degree, the doctrines, upon the knowledge and belief of which the salvation of every man to whom they are proposed depends. These are written in the plainest and most intelligible manner, and of their several parts there is the most perfect harmony. Nevertheless, it is desirable, both for the honour of revelation and the satisfaction of the inquiring mind, that even the difficulties to which we have referred should be removed; that apparent

contradictions should be reconciled; that seeming discrepancies should be adjusted; that mistranslations should be corrected; that references to obsolete customs and ceremonies should be explained: in a word, that our Scriptures should be raised in the utmost degree to the original character which they sustained.

## ANECDOTES OF FRENCH INFIDELITY.

THE following anecdotes are related by Madame la Comtesse de Genlis, in a work entitled "The Dinner Parties of the Baron d'Holbach:"—

"Morvel, an actor, sat in the pulpit of the cathedral of Notre-Dame, at Paris, during the French revolution, as *High Priest of Reason*; and, eight years afterwards, he died in the most dreadful state of raving *madness*.

"Mademoiselle Aubry, an actress of the opera, nearly naked, and representing the *Goddess of Reason*, was seated upon the high altar of the church of Notre-Dame, to receive the solemn homage of the people. This same woman, seven years afterwards, playing *Minerva*, in an opera, and being placed in a sort of car, fell from the top of the theatre, all the cords of the machine breaking at once. The fall knocked out her teeth, broke her shoulder and one of her legs, and disfigured her face in a most frightful manner. Two children, who were to have been placed at the foot of the goddess, representing the Genii of Arts, were detained by an accident in the Rue des Lombards; they were taken into a shop, where they remained a quarter of an hour. Madlle. Aubry wished to wait for them, before she mounted the car: the audience, however, would not suffer this; and even when a few minutes longer delay was solicited, they refused it. The children arrived just at the moment of the fall!

"Here we observe the 'high priest of reason' dying *distracted*; the 'goddess' receiving her punishment *in the very same character* in which her crime had been committed; and innocence spared in the person of the children. What food for reflection!"

## SERMON XIV.

THE SACRIFICES WHICH PAUL WAS WILLING TO MAKE IN THE CAUSE  
OF CHRIST.

BY THE REV. JOHN FRENCH,

MINISTER OF THE RELIEF CHURCH, COLLEGE STREET, EDINBURGH.

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*“What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”—Acts xxi. 13.*

WHEN Paul uttered these words, he was on his return from one of those Christian missions in which he had so zealously embarked for the spread of the gospel. In this, and a preceding mission, he had visited some of the most celebrated regions and renowned cities of the world. With indefatigable step, he had toiled his way over no small portion of Syria, Arabia, Asia Minor, and Europe. He had sailed the waters of the Mediterranean sea. He had coursed his track among those innumerable islands that so beautifully stud the Grecian Archipelago. On the soil of ancient Troy—along the classic shores of Greece—at Antioch, Ephesus, Philippi, Corinth, and Athens, he had planted the standard of the cross, and proclaimed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Saviour of the world.

In the performance of this arduous duty he had passed through many perils, suffered many hardships, and been the victim of the most atrocious persecution and cruelty. Those places now named may indeed be famed for many things, in history, in fable, and in song; but amid all their other celebrity, for this also have they obtained an infamous notoriety, that when one of the most benevolent men whom the world ever saw, spoke to them in the language of truth and soberness, they mercilessly treated him as the veriest wretch that ever society hunted out of its pale.

But if Paul had his share of sufferings, he had his triumphs too. The gospel prospered in his hand. His divine Master gave him souls for his hire. His fellest enemies were at times given him as the trophies of his faithfulness, patience, and heroism. He who in the same night thrust Paul's feet into the stocks, and consigned him, all scourged and wounded as he was, to the deepest dungeon of a prison—that very same person, on that very same night, lay trembling as a penitent at his feet, bathing his wounds, asking the way of salvation, and humbly receiving the baptism of a Christian at his hands.

The gospel which Paul thus taught to thousands was, in these its early days, a powerful, fruitful principle. They who embraced it felt its softening influence melt their hearts, and prompt them to all the charities of life. They gave with no niggard hand to the support of the gospel, and to the relief of the poor. And as the poor Christians in Jerusalem were at this time suffering many privations, it would appear, that, collections having been made in the most of those Gentile churches which Paul had planted, the apostle himself was sent as their honoured almoner, to carry this their bounty to their suffering brethren in Jerusalem. It is in the prosecution of this object we meet with him in our text. As the apostle proceeded on his journey, he received many, and

these by no means obscure intimations, that this journey to Jerusalem was to be eminently perilous. He tells us, that in every city to which he came, the Holy Ghost witnessed that bonds and afflictions awaited him. Apprized of such a fact as this, no wonder that his attached friends might wish to save a life so dear and so valuable as was Paul's. And, however questionable and ill-judged their interference with the course of events which the Holy Ghost foretold, it was no doubt, on their part, a well-meant kindness to the devoted Paul. Accordingly, when first he landed at Tyre, and now when he had reached Cesarea, his Christian friends in both places most earnestly besought him not to go up to that Jerusalem that had killed so many prophets, stoned so many of God's messengers, and upon whose inhabitants was to be charged all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zacharias, whom they slew between the temple and the altar.

But Paul's was never the craven heart of a coward. Tell him where duty lay, and no terrors could shake his soul, or turn him from his invincible attachment to Christ and his cause. While sensibly alive therefore to these, the intense sympathies and melting entreaties of friendship, we hear him replying with all the passionate fervour of a saint, and all the resolute heroism of a martyr—"What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

This text presents two topics for illustration.

I. THE SACRIFICES WHICH PAUL WAS WILLING TO MAKE IN THE CAUSE OF CHRIST.

II. THE EXALTED OBJECT FOR WHICH HE WAS WILLING TO MAKE THESE SACRIFICES—IT WAS FOR THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS.

It is only to the first of these topics that we shall at present call your attention. We are then, in this discourse, to illustrate the sacrifices which Paul was willing to make in the cause of Christ.

1. And here I remark that the spirit of our text implies that Paul was willing to sacrifice his ease and comfort, and to devote all the energies of his body and soul to the honour of Christ's name.

The spirit of our text, we say, warrants this specification. For here the mere toil of voyaging by sea and travelling by land in this, his present mission, implies no mean sacrifice of ease, and no mean expenditure of laborious exertion. The whole of Paul's apostolical life was an illustration of his willingness to do and bear the utmost of which humanity is capable. Of his mere travels alone, those parts of Scripture which describe them afford us but the scantiest itinerary. A brief chapter will at times comprehend the toil and travel of many thousand miles. Had Paul passed over these in the lady-like fashion of many modern tourists, enjoying all those helps and appliances which science, art, and luxury can now supply, many might have envied him the pleasure of visiting some of the loveliest regions of the globe. But when we hear him saying of himself, and of his fellow apostles, "Even unto the present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things;" and when, with more precise reference to himself, we hear him enumerate the catalogue of his sufferings, "In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prison more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things

which are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?"—and still farther, my friends, when we contemplate not only these, properly speaking, his passive toils, but also his more active strenuous efforts to save souls—when we think of him toiling with his hands to earn a bit of bread, while he distributed so munificently the bread of life to others—when we think of him planting so many churches, watering those already planted, preaching in synagogues, and in all places of public resort, visiting from house to house, writing epistles, reasoning with the learned, grappling with the enemies of civil liberty, and asserting the sacred rights of freedom, declaiming before a Felix, a Festus, and an Agrippa, with an eloquence more powerful than that "which fulminated over Greece, and shook the throne of Macedon"—in short, when we think of him as doing every thing, and attempting every thing, whereby he might win souls to Jesus, we feel that we live in the age of little men, that Christian character is dwarfed by the barrenness of a degenerate age, and that would we do for Christ all that duty binds us to do, we must look to such examples as that of Paul, and strive to catch from him that burning zeal for the Redeemer's honour, which existed and flamed so mightily in his ardent soul. We hold up to your gaze the example of Paul, and we call upon you to act in the spirit of his heroic declaration, which we are now considering.

Applying this branch of our subject, therefore, to our own cases, bringing it home to ourselves, the question now is, what are the sacrifices of ease and of comfort, and what the attempts and exertions which all of us in our various spheres ought to make for the honour of Christ's name? It will not do to take refuge under the excuse, "I am not an apostle;"—the question is, Are you a Christian? Are you a disciple of Jesus? If you are, Christ will find you work in every sphere of life. There is no station which any one of you occupies, but in which you may make sacrifices and exer-

tions eminently calculated to promote the honour of Christ's name. As magistrates, ministers, physicians, teachers, merchants, traders, artisans, all in your different spheres, may do something for Christ. Let it be a question then with every conscientious man and woman in this assembly, "What is it that I can sacrifice? what is it that I can suffer? what is it that I can do for the name of the Lord Jesus?"

Need I specify what you can contribute to the furtherance of Christ's honour. Some can give their labour, some their time, some their talents, some their wealth, some their influence, some their example, some their prayers; some may give all of these, some two or more of them; and there is not one of you but who may at least live, and suffer, and pray for the honour of Christ's name. Who, I ask, is so insulated in this world as not to have father, or mother, wife, child, brother, sister, friend, neighbour, or acquaintance, to whom he may do some good? Who absolutely so busy, as not to have one odd hour, one spare moment to devote to religious purposes? Who so talentless, so mindless, so actionless, as not to be capable of filling some post of usefulness in the Christian church? He who cannot speak and argue, can act; and he who can do but little even in that way, may at least have it said of him, that "he has done what he could." Who so ignorant as not to know something which, if communicated, might instruct some more ignorant soul? Who so poor as not to be able at least to show a willingness to help religion forward? While the sun endures, and while the Bible lasts, the poor widow's mite shall stand blazoned on the inspired page in brighter memorial than the richest endowments ever consecrated to the support of religion by titled wealth or ostentatious charity.

But still some of you may object—we have not time, we have not convenience, we have not means, we have not money to engage in this work. We urge in reply, that even though every one of these apologies and excuses were sustained, there is not one of you but must be push-

ed to the last extremity to get rid of this claim,—“that at least you can give the example of holy living, and the benefit of your prayers, for the honour of Christ’s name.” And in relation to a still greater number, I would press the inquiry, that in order to add to your means and ability of doing good, may nothing be taken from your sleep, nothing from your hours of idleness and amusement, nothing from the cost of your pleasures, nothing from the luxuries of food, and the luxuries of dress, and the luxuries of furniture? Can nothing from one of these be spared to honour Jesus or save a soul? Let conscience, taking its station at the foot of Christ’s cross, and instructing itself by the plain uncompromising precepts of God’s word, give an answer that will satisfy at the judgment-seat of God.

But, upon what objects, then, perhaps you ask me, are we to lay out all this expenditure of labour, time, talents, wealth, influence, example, and prayers? Why, my friends, the ways of doing good are immensely numerous and diversified. You may countenance and support all the varieties of religious institutions; you may contribute to missionary societies, or you may lend them your assistance; you may take an interest in Sabbath-schools; you may form and support libraries; you may circulate tracts; you may give your attendance at prayer meetings; you may visit the sick; you may read the Scriptures to the aged; you may counsel the young and inexperienced; you may frown on every species of error and crime; you may reprove sin; you may display public spirit by patronizing scientific, literary, and humane institutions; you may do what you can to remove all national, provincial, or local grievances; in short, you may encourage and adopt all scriptural means for the spread and revival of religion—for the growth of piety and the increase of happiness wherever man has a dwelling round the wide circle of the globe.

Now, my friends, having shown you what you may do for Christ, I insist on your coming to the conviction that it is your duty to do it. Surely you read in your Bibles that you are to be “ready to

every good work;” “to be zealous of good works;” “zealously affected in all good things;” “that you are to be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;” “that you are to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;” that “you are to run, and strive, and fight in the business of salvation; that you are as it were to take heaven by violence;” and that when you have done all, from a consciousness that you have done too little, you are to acknowledge yourselves “unprofitable servants.”

Feeling the force of these the commands of your God, I trust every Christian now hearing me will exclaim with the poet—

Awake, my dormant zeal! for ever flame  
With generous ardour for immortal souls;  
And may my head, my tongue, my heart,  
my all,  
Spend and be spent in service so divine.

2d. In the second place, I remark, that Paul was willing to sacrifice earthly friendships for the name of the Lord Jesus. This idea is prominently suggested by these affecting words, “What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart?”

Could the endearments of the tenderest friendship have restrained Paul from the performance of his duty to his Saviour, such a powerful motive was not wanting in his case. He was loved with no common affection by those among whom he laboured in the ministry of the gospel. Our text is one proof of it. These persons entreated and besought him to have a care for his safety and his life, and when they could urge and beseech no more, they employed the sad but powerful eloquence of weeping and of tears. This, however, was not one solitary occurrence. In the preceding chapter, at the conclusion of a narrative, to me more exquisitely pathetic than almost any writing I am acquainted with, we meet with the following account of Paul’s parting interview with the Ephesian church. “And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul’s neck and kissed him, sorrowing

most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more."

Now, my hearers, we are by no means to suppose that Paul was insensible to these, the melting sympathies of friendship. No! Paul's soul was not of that *iron mould*, that *sterner stuff*, that makes some men think it disgraceful to shed a tear, and unmanly to display any tenderness of feeling. Neither his piety nor his manners were of that austere kind that extorts our veneration, while we are chilled into distant awe by the cold repelling air which is ever thrown around them. The sanctity of Paul's character was of a warmer, kindlier, and more attractive form. He had the secret of winning hearts. He threw his heart and soul into all that he said, and wrote, and acted; and when this is perceived, congenial minds, like all other affinities, cling to each other with mutual ardour and affection. The very language of the text affords illustration of this remark upon the apostle's character. "What mean ye," said he, "to weep and to break mine heart?" This you will observe is not the language of cold and unfeeling rebuke. His own heart was wrung by this proof of their affection. The state of his soul thus described by himself, was an echo to their weeping; and the mental pang was to him the more severe, that a purer and a loftier principle forbade him to yield to their pressing entreaties. His was the bitter agony of giving a denial to weeping friends pleading even for himself.

Here, then, is the nobleness of Paul's present sacrifice. Like all eminent saints, his character was a well balanced one. He loved his friends well, but he loved his Saviour better. Earthly friends had their claims which he duly regarded, but the love of Christ was uppermost in his soul. In the very hour, therefore, in which he might be said to enjoy the luxury of loving hearts, he was willing to tear himself from them; and, though it should be to bondage and to death, to go wherever God, and truth, and duty called him.

And now, my hearers, if you are not

prepared to show that Paul was in the wrong, we call upon you, in duty, to go and do likewise. Beware lest earthly friendships of any kind wean your hearts from Jesus, and rob him of his due. I would not have you undervalue friendship, for it has been said, and I believe justly, to double our pleasures and divide our sorrows; but never let it usurp that sovereign place in your hearts which belongs to God and to Christ alone.

Let this caution extend to those friends who are related to us by the ties of blood and affinity. An excessive attachment to these is very apt to cool the ardour of Christian zeal. The love of a husband, and the fondness of a father, have often proved serious obstacles to an intrepid avowal and defence of the gospel. Ah! well does he who has fought in the battle field, know how much the thoughts of home, of wife, and of children, have rushed upon his recollection, palsied his arm, and almost unmanned his heart, when the drum beat to arms, and when the battle's opening roar foreboded to his mind that never should he again see his home and his children. Could the soldier but get rid of these feelings, the bitterness of death would be past; and, fearless of all other consequences, would he rush upon the foe. And what the warrior thus feels the Christian also experiences. He finds that not merely in circumstances of danger, but even in the more ordinary duties of every-day life, the cares of a family, and the attachments which it calls forth, are frequently most unfavourable to piety and religion. Let not, then, these social ties so wind round your heart, so engross your sympathies, as to neglect your duty to your God and your Saviour. Yours may not be the trying lot to live in persecuting times, when it would have become you to arm for Christian war, and to die a martyr's death, and when the last farewell of weeping friends and relations might have proved the bitterest dreg in the cup of sorrow which you had to drain; but remember that temptations, as dangerous to your spiritual safety, may come from friends and relations, when neither war, intolerance, nor persecution,

disturbs the enjoyment of domestic peace. Did not the fruit of the forbidden tree pass through Eve's hands to Adam, even in a state of peaceful, happy innocence? Was not Samson shorn of his strength through a blind love for Delilah, rather than by the might of the Philistine bands? and was it not from the wife of his bosom that Job received the dreadful counsel to curse God and die? Attach then to every object its due importance; and, since God has the first and indisputable claim to your regards, let no earthly affection divide your heart with him. Said Christ, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."

But, besides these, there are other friendships in the world, which, though not to be coveted, are very apt to decoy us from the path of duty. I refer to the corrupting influence of those persons whose birth, rank, and fortune, place them above us in society, and to whom slavish minds are but too apt to crouch for the paltriest favour—a nod, or a smile. Thus Moses was exposed to the ensnaring blandishments of the court of Pharaoh; Elijah was tried at the court of Ahab and of Jezebel; John the Baptist was tried for a time by the sinister friendship of Herod and Herodias; Paul by that of Felix and Drusilla; and our own Knox had to withstand the witching beauty and duplicity of a Scottish queen.

Your lot and mine, my friends, are not likely to be cast in spheres like these; but wherever there is rank superior to our own in alliance with vice, and we are brought in contact with it, there the danger is the same in kind, if not in degree. In all such circumstances, let the elevating consciousness of being a Christian—of being born of God, and of having a home in the skies, restrain you from conceding one essential truth, or diverging one line from the track which God's word and your conscience tell you are right.

3d. In the third place, I remark that Paul was willing to sacrifice his liberty for the name of the Lord Jesus.

In the preceding context, we learn that there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus; and when he was come to Cesarea, he "took Paul's girdle, (or sash,) and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. And when we had heard these things, both we and they of that place besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus."

I crave your particular attention to this noble declaration as made by Paul. Observe the remarkable circumstances in which it was made, and which characterize it. It was not upon a contingency which might happen or might not happen, that Paul declared his willingness to surrender his liberty. It was not upon the gloomy foreboding of a diseased mind dreading the occurrence of evils which might never take place. It was not a peradventure that Paul was to be made a prisoner. It was as certain as the Holy Ghost could testify it from his infinite knowledge of all events past, present, and future. In every place to which Paul had lately come, the testimony was repeated, that bonds and imprisonments awaited him; and even now when within little more than one day's journey of Jerusalem, and when solemnly told by language and by symbol that his hands should be manacled, and his feet fettered like a slave; it was in these circumstances of peculiar solemnity that Paul, taking up the very language of his doom from the mouth of the Holy Ghost, declared his readiness to be bound at Jerusalem for the name of his blessed Master.

Observe here, also, what was the history of the man who made this declaration. He was not one who slighted untried hardships. The poet has said,

"He jests at scars who never felt a wound."

Paul was not one of this description. He was not one who acted the braggart in

peace, but who had proved a coward in war. He knew well what imprisonment was. He could count the cost of forfeited liberty, for he had already, for the sake of his religion, been frequently a prisoner.

What then? Did Paul slight or undervalue liberty? No!—not for one moment are we to suppose it. His history warrants me to say, that the love of freedom burned as ardently in Paul's bosom as ever it did in that of a Brutus or a Tell. We are to remember this was the man who contended for liberty against all the hirelings of intolerance at the judgment-seat of Felix and of Festus. This was the man who would not abate one jot of his civil rights, when he conceived the assertion of them could be of any possible advantage to himself or to society—who, at Philippi, would not even walk out of his dungeon till the magistrates themselves came and acknowledged that they had wronged him, and besought him to depart. This was the man, who, on another occasion, protested against being bound, and against having one stripe laid upon him, because he was a Roman citizen. This was the man, who, when unjustly and brutally struck in the Jewish Sanhedrim, by the command of the high priest, intrepidly and indignantly replied, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall; for sittest thou to judge me according to the law, and dost *thou* command me to be smitten *contrary to the law*?" In short this was the man, who, rather than submit to proconsular tyranny and injustice, appealed to Cæsar, and was thus transmitted a prisoner to imperial Rome.

Paul then was not one who slighted the freedom which, at this time, he professed himself willing to sacrifice. He appreciated highly its value, and might in other circumstances have bled to defend it. What then is the solution of this enigma? this riddle? The explanation is to be found in the object for which the sacrifice was to be made. It was for the name of the Lord Jesus—it was for the honour of him, who, in the form of a slave, was led to prison, to judgment, and to crucifixion, that men might be no

longer the oppressed thralls of sin, of Satan, and of hell.

I have only further to observe here, that the sacrifice which Paul thus professed himself willing to make, was one which, as you know, he actually made. He did not falsify his engagement, or quail before his enemies when his chains were put upon him. The noblest stroke of oratory which, perhaps, he or mortal ever uttered, was when in the presence of Agrippa: with these fetters upon his arms, he exclaimed, "Would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds!" Through the injustice of Felix, in these bonds he was confined for two years a prisoner at Cesarea; and, subsequently, at Rome, for other two years he was a chained prisoner at large, with a soldier to guard him.

Paul well knew that Christ deserved all, and more than all this at his hands, though no advantage should result from it. But to stimulate his willingness to make the sacrifice, he no doubt believed, as the event showed, that great good would flow from his imprisonment and his bonds, whereby an increase of glory would redound to the honoured name of Jesus.

At this stage of our subject, then, we would glance at the benefit which accrued to the religion of Christ, from the imprisonment of Paul.

Through Paul's captivity at Rome, the gospel was carried at once to the very heart of the Roman empire, from which, as a radiating centre, it no doubt more readily found its way to distant provinces and colonies. Through the same providential occurrence, the gospel found access to the very palace of the imperial Cæsars; and though a Nero might still remain a tyrant and a monster, it is highly probable that some influential officers of his household and of the state were at least favourably impressed towards the Christian faith. At all events, we are certain that the intrepid and magnanimous bearing of Paul under his bonds, tended to the furtherance of the gospel,

and inspired the primitive converts with a courage that made them bold to preach the truth without fear. But to the captivity of Paul, in a more especial manner, are we indebted for many of those inspired epistles which bear his name. These were the fruits of his captive hours. When he could no longer, with his living voice, go round the world as a Christian herald, calling upon men to come to Jesus and be saved, with the unrestrainable spirit of a faithful and devoted minister, he instructed the churches by his pen, and sent down to us these precious memorials of his inspired wisdom. What a blank would have been in the canon of Scripture had these epistles not been written! By these, though dead, Paul shall still speak to the churches till time shall be no more. By means of these, we may yet be said to be instructed, and counselled, and comforted by Paul, even while now his sainted spirit is with God and with Jesus, sharing in all the glories and blessed with the felicities of that happier world.

And now, my Christian hearers, from the example of Paul, let me urge upon you the duty of being prepared to make a similar sacrifice for Christ, if God in his mysterious providence should ever demand it at your hands. And I urge this as a duty, with the more confidence that these favourable results, arising from captivity and imprisonment, were not peculiar to the case of Paul. Every Bible reader is well aware what benefits flowed to God's church from Joseph's imprisonment in Egypt; from Esther's exile as a captive maid in Persia; from the confinement of Jeremiah in the dungeon; from Daniel's captivity in Babylon; from Peter's imprisonment at Jerusalem; and from John's banishment to the lone isle of Patmos. Nor is modern history wanting in illustrations of the happy effects which have flowed from a sacrifice of liberty in the cause of Jesus. For ten months Luther was shut up in the castle of Wartenberg; but there he translated a great part of the New Testament into German—there he wrote his notes on the evangelists—there he composed many

treatises in confutation of his enemies, which were eminently useful to the work of the Reformation, and which, but for his confinement, might never have been produced. It was in a lonely monastery on the banks of the Rhine, that John Huss, the Bohemian reformer, was kept for many years a doomed prisoner, and where he wrote several useful works for the benefit of the church. It was in prison that our great Scottish linguist Buchanan wrote his beautiful version of the Psalms of David. It was in prison that the learned Grotius produced his admirable treatise "On the Truth of the Christian Religion." And it was in prison that John Bunyan wrote his well known inimitable allegory which, by translation into foreign tongues, may now be called, not merely a British, but a European Christian classic. In the jail of Bedford, for twelve years and a half, was this good man a prisoner, and all because he would not refrain from preaching the gospel of Christ. Liberty was offered him on condition that he would not, but with dauntless honesty he still replied, "If you let me out to-day, I shall preach again to-morrow."

To these instances I would only add the highly interesting case of Bernard Palissy. "This person was one of the most extraordinary men of his time, and had greatly benefited his country by his improvements in the arts. Although a Protestant, he had, through the royal favour of Charles the Ninth of France, escaped from the massacre of St. Bartholomew. But having soon after been shut up in the Bastille, he was visited in prison by the king, who told him that if he did not comply with the established (popish) religion, he should be *forced*, however unwillingly, to leave him in the hands of his enemies. '*Forced!*' replied Palissy, 'this is not to speak like a king; but they who *force* you *cannot force me. I can die.*' He never regained his liberty, but ended his life in the Bastille in the ninetyeth year of his age."\* O! that the spirit of men like these would de-

\* See Pursuit of Knowledge under Difficulties.

scend upon *us*. O! that the mantle of their zeal, their devotedness, and their courage, might fall upon the Christians of our degenerate age.

We are far from wishing that the trying times of persecution may return, for, under a sense of our weakness, our prayer should ever be, "Lead us not into temptation." But surely, surely, to display the zeal of working in peaceful times is as clearly our duty as to show the zeal of suffering in times of persecution. Let a generous shame, therefore, for our poor stunted attainments excite us to renewed ardour in the Christian race, and if God is mercifully exempting us from imprisonment, captivity, or exile—if he is blessing us with the sweets of liberty, let the rich blessing only be the more gratefully and diligently improved to the honour of the giver.

4. In the fourth place, we remark, that Paul was willing to sacrifice his life for the name of the Lord Jesus.

Paul was a man who lived exclusively for Christ. It was the first, last, constant feeling of his soul, "how shall I best promote the honour of my God and Saviour?" He knew no end, and sought no end of existence but this. If the glory of Jesus could be best promoted by living, then, though hardships unutterable should be his lot, he was willing to live, because he could live to the honour of Christ; but if, by dying, he could honour Jesus the more, then to die was he willing, since by dying he could die to the glory of Jesus. Living or dying, Paul's wish was to be the Lord's.

We do not found this opinion on our text merely. His whole life proves it. On a recent occasion we find him saying, "The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." We are not to imagine that Paul was on these occasions surprised by the warmth of his present feelings into a hasty engagement from which afterwards he might wish to re-

claim. No! He was now for a long time habitually ready to run all hazards in the cause of Jesus. He who ere this had been in deaths oft—he who at Lystra had been stoned, drawn out of the city and left as a dead man by his murderous assailants, may surely, without any suspicion of empty boasting, receive credit for an engagement from which he was not likely to flinch. To desert his post, to recant his faith, to flee from duty because danger lay in the path, were assuredly never the actions of the apostle Paul. In this he possessed a common feature of soul with all who have displayed the true spirit of martyrdom in every age. Such was the spirit of an Esther, who, in the cause of humanity, and with the penalty of death, for intrusion into the king's presence, before her eyes, went notwithstanding into the king, exclaiming, "If I perish, I perish!" Such was the spirit of a Nehemiah, who, when threatened with assassination in the performance of duty, and when advised to flee for safety to the temple, undauntedly replied, "Should such a man as I flee? and who is there that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in." Such was the spirit of the three Hebrew captives, who, when a flaming fiery furnace had been heated to sevenfold fury for their destruction, addressed the intolerant tyrant, in these words of cool and matchless heroism, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king! But if not, be it known unto thee, O king! that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Such was the spirit of a Daniel, who, when he knew that the decree was signed, dooming him to a den of lions if he offered up one prayer to God or man for thirty days, yet notwithstanding, with calm resolution, went into his house, as if no such decree had passed, and with his windows open to Jerusalem, "kneeling upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God as he did aforetime."

Paul, we say, shared in the spirit of these men. Having entered the field, he kept it: never laid down his arms—never sought quarter—never from cowardly feeling cried “hold” to the persecutor, but, had he possessed them, would have laid down ten thousand lives for the love he bore to Jesus.

I can imagine that some may allege that there was enthusiasm in all this. I know well, my friends, in common with any student of ecclesiastical history, that for three hundred years the name of a Christian was death, martyrdom became so common that towards the close of that period a morbid unnatural craving for it seized many Christian professors. They courted persecution—they suffered gratuitous torture, and, in some cases died almost without necessity. Ignatius is said to have displayed this questionable ardour for martyrdom. Origen is said to have been so earnest to suffer with his father, when he was a youth of sixteen years of age, that, if his mother had not kept his clothes from him, he would have run to the place where his father suffered, to profess himself a Christian, and to suffer with him. It is related of a poor woman of those times, that, making haste to the place where many Christians were to be burned, she was met by a persecutor who addressed her, “Why make such haste to that place, there are many to be burned?” “Ah!” said she, “that I know, and I am afraid all will be done before I come. I and my child would fain suffer with them.”

Now, while I admit that men have endured the most extreme torments in fanatical adherence to a false creed, and have thus illustrated the maxim, “that it is not the blood but the cause that makes the martyr;” and while I also know that a strong necessity must be made out, and a proper spirit possessed for dying as a martyr even in a good cause, since some may rush on death, as the warrior at times does, from a greedy lust of fame; yet, after all these admissions are made, I also know that Paul, in common with thousands of those who have bled for Christianity, possessed every qualification as a martyr, without the slightest taint of

a spurious enthusiasm. We never read of him inflicting on himself those gloomy penances or unnatural mortifications, practised by Brahminical devotees or melancholy monks. We never read of him attempting to scourge himself into piety, or starve himself into saintship; in him an enlightened sobriety tempered the sternest and most inflexible resolution. We have already shown, he guarded his life, liberty, and civil rights, on all occasions, like one who was accountable not only for their use, but also for their loss. He never unnecessarily threw himself into the hands of his persecuting enemies. He promptly availed himself of every lawful means of defence and escape, and suffered only when suffering could be avoided in no other way than by neglecting his duty, denying his faith, wronging his conscience, and offending his God. Sooner than do these all the martyr rose in his soul. The sufferings which Paul endured had thus about them all the requisite sterling value of a martyr’s knowledge, and a martyr’s sincerity. He well understood the religion which he professed. He was able to give to every one that asked him a reason of the hope that was in him, with meekness and fear. He knew well what he believed—for what and for whom he suffered; and, knowing this, there was no sacrifice short of his soul’s salvation which, in proper time and place, he was not willing to make in proof of his sincerity. And it was under the influence of this devout and most rational enthusiasm that Paul, on the present occasion, exclaimed, “What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”

You are aware, my friends, that though Paul was thus ready to die at Jerusalem, should his master’s honour demand it, it was not for a considerable period that the forfeit of his faith was called for at his hands. During four years, as already stated, he was a prisoner at Cesarea and Rome. Subsequent to this he itinerated the world, as he had done before, preaching the gospel, encountering every extremity of danger, enduring hardships

and privations, but still pressing on to the mark for the prize of his high calling. And even after he was fully ripe for heaven, when life to him was loss, and death gain unspeakable, even then the blessed Paul, with a self-denial never surpassed by any follower of Christ, was willing to have his coronation in glory delayed, if, by continuing on earth, he could save souls and honour Jesus. But at length the period of his martyrdom arrived. When the precise time was, ancient historians are not fully agreed; they are all agreed, however, as to the manner of his death. Being a Roman citizen, he was beheaded at a place called Salvia Waters, about three miles from the city of Rome, and his body was interred in the Ostium way. From his second epistle to Timothy it appears that he anticipated both the time and the nature of his death. The sayings of dying men have often been repeated. This was Paul's: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

And now, my Christian friends, in concluding this discourse, let me urge you to imitate the example of Paul, in being willing to sacrifice life itself for the name of the Lord Jesus. It is true, you at present enjoy religious liberty and live in peaceful times. You are blessed with the privilege of worshipping God as your consciences dictate, free from the sanguinary penalties of Scotland's Marian days. Here the serpent brood of persecutors have, for the time, slunk into their den. The Sharpes, the Lauderdale and the lords of the council, who argued so powerfully with boot, thumb-screw, and gibbet, have all passed away. The Scottish Attila, Clavers, has gone to his account, and bloody Bell sleeps in his grave. But remember that eighteen thousand of their martyred victims also sleep in the dust. While their blood cries to heaven for vengeance, it cries

also to every friend of Jesus, and of religious liberty, "*Beware!* be ye also ready for the hour of danger and of trial." Let no friend of freedom, then, desert his post. There is no truce in Satan's heart towards the church or her liberties; and if there be a tyrannical priest or peer in the land, that man is a tool and emissary of Satan, and has in him the same deathless principle of hostility. In the hand of a merciful Providence, public opinion may now be your safeguard, but just because religious liberty is on the advance, just because the scriptural churches of Christ in this island, instead of existing by mere sufferance, have the present prospect of existing by constitutional right and law, just on that very account hell and its emissaries are so much the more likely to take the alarm, and make some desperate effort to regain the prey taken from them. Judging by the spirit of high-church intolerance breathed by many in our times—judging by the tone of stern defiance assumed, the bitter and rancorous spirit displayed by many of the dominant church party toward those who are asserting merely their rights and claiming nothing but their own—judging by these things, it is not a breach of charity to say, that there are men in our land who clearly indicate that had they but the power, they have unquestionably the will, to light up the smouldering fires of bigotry, and to draw the sword of persecution again from its scabbard.

Let Christians, then, stand to their arms, take good heed of passing events, watch carefully the ebb and flow of public sentiment, guard well their liberties, and come what come may, though it should be to offer up our lives on the altar of Christianity, never, never again to let the souls of Scotchmen be enslaved and misled by priestly tyranny. But remember, my fellow Christians, though the necessity should never arrive, it is your duty to reach the conviction that your life should be at Christ's call and solely at his disposal. "We are to take up our cross and follow him."—"We are to resist unto blood striving against sin."—"We are not to love our lives to the death." Besides, you have other

enemies than these with which you have to wage, in this life, an interminable war. Sin, Satan, and the world, are your banded deadly foes: till death close the strife, from this war there is no discharge. Here also there can be no honour in retreat, no safety in flying. "*Forward*," is the motto of all Christ's soldiers; "victory or death," is the watch-word here. Let the Spirit of the Lord then come upon you as it came upon Samson of old. "Quit you like men and be strong." Remember, that in Christ's army every true soldier is a hero, and every hero crowned. Hear your Saviour saying, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame and am seated with my Father on his throne."

Still, further, let it be remembered for whose sake you suffer. It is for Jesus, who, by the shedding of his blood, has answered to God for all your sins—for Jesus, who has plucked you as a brand from hell's burning fire, and blessed you with the hope of heaven's unutterable glory. It is for Jesus, at whose name heaven now rings with hosannas—for Jesus, in whom God the Father supremely delights—for Jesus, before whom cherubim and seraphim bow down and adore—for Jesus, at whose feet the spirits of the redeemed cast all their crowns, while they cry, "Worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

But perhaps a sense of your own weakness overwhelms you; then remember that the strength of the Lord of Hosts is ever on your side. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, into which his people run and are safe. His perfections are pledged, that whatever perils and dangers may befall you, at least your soul and salvation shall never be lost. In every hour of need, he commands angelic legions to take their station as guards around the fighting Christian. Had you but faith, you might with a keener vision than that given to the prophet's servant, see these hills and the wide cope of heaven lined with horses and chariots of fire, all ready to minister to the heirs of salvation.

In fine, remember that your conflict, at

the longest, shall be short, and its termination glorious; a few steps more—a few struggles more—a few wrestling prayers and efforts more, and then your sorrows and sufferings shall all be ended; then the rude blasts of life shall all be spent—the thick clouds of trial shall have all passed away, and the eternal sunshine of glory shall settle on your head. Yes, there remains a rest for the people of God. Beyond these skies there is a purer heaven, where God, and Jesus, and holy spirits dwell. There, they who have won the crown of saintship, or of martyrdom, shall wear it. Never shall they be tried by danger or hazard more. Their battles are all fought—their victories are all gained—and the loud shout of salvation to God and to the Lamb, rises in triumphant jubilee for ever and ever. Amen.

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#### RELIGIOUS CONVERSATION.

I WILL tell you a story which I have from very good hands, of two very eminent men, both for learning and piety, in the last age, or rather the beginning of the present; the one of them a great prelate, (indeed a primate,) and the other a churchman of great note. These two eminent men, as they often met together, to consult the interest of learning, and the affairs of the church; so when they had despatched that, they seldom parted from one another without such an encounter as this: "Come, good doctor," saith the bishop, "let us now talk a little of Jesus Christ." Or, on the other side, said the doctor, "Come, my lord, let me hear your grace talk of the goodness of God, with your wonted eloquence: let us warm one another's hearts with heaven, that we may the better bear this cold world." And this they performed with that holy reverence and ardent zeal, with that delightful sense and feeling, that afforded matter of admiration to those of their friends or servants that happened to be present, or to overhear them. Here is now an example of holy conference, without a preface, and yet without exception: a precedent, easy to imitate wherever there is a like spirit of piety.—*Goodman's Winter Evening Conference.*

## SERMON XV.

THE DUTY AND IMPORTANCE OF DULY IMPROVING GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL  
AND GRACIOUS VISITATIONS.

BY THE REV. W. NAYLOR.

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“*The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.*”—Jer. viii. 20.

SUCH was the mournful conclusion of ancient Israel; mournful indeed, if only applied to their political state, as a nation suffering the horrors of an invading army; for it is supposed that, at this period, Jerusalem was a besieged city, and that Israel, instead of humbling themselves before God and imploring the interposition of his power, had listened unto the deceptive language of the false prophets, who flattered them with a speedy deliverance; but the period of promised deliverance came; it passed by, and salvation was unknown. But still more mournful is this conclusion, when applied to their moral state, as a people who had allowed gracious opportunities of spiritual salvation to pass by unimproved. Such opportunities they had frequently been favoured with; for God had sent unto them all his servants, the prophets, who had plainly warned them of danger, and had clearly pointed out to them the only way of deliverance. Among these the prophet Jeremiah took a lofty station: he loved his country, and wept over her desolations; he traced all her calamities unto the wickedness of her inhabitants; and their sin he faithfully reproved, and their reformation he diligently sought; yet his labours among them were so fruitless and despised, that he declared, “When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me.” There were, however, seasons when they were constrained to reflect on their ways, and were made sensible of the folly and danger of their conduct.

This appears to have been their state when, in the anguish of their distress, they exclaimed, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.” These words, in whatever sense they were employed by Israel, are descriptive of the moral state of many at this day, who, after all that God has done for them and to them and with them, are constrained, on reflection from conviction, to confess, “Many favoured harvests of blessings have passed by, and many summer seasons of valuable opportunities have ended, but we are not saved from the dominion of sin and danger of eternal death.” Solemn thought!—serious consideration! This scripture, suggested by the present season of the year, is calculated to promote our instruction in righteousness, by attending to those important truths it presents unto the reflecting mind. From it we observe,

*First, TO PROMOTE OUR SALVATION FROM THE DOMINION AND CONSEQUENCES OF SIN, WE ARE GRACIOUSLY FAVOURED OF GOD WITH AN ABUNDANCE OF SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS.*

The word harvest, whether it be employed literally or figuratively, is a word expressive of abundance; so that harvest blessings are abundant blessings; and numerous are the blessings with which we are favoured of God, designed by him to promote our salvation. Among many we notice a few, deserving of consideration. To promote our salvation, God has granted unto us,

*First, The teaching of his gospel.*

That the gospel is designed of God and calculated to promote the salvation of man, is manifest from the nature and import of those instructions which it affords; for, by the gospel, we are instructed concerning *the necessity of salvation*. Thus, it informs us that man is naturally depraved, that he is born in sin, bringing into the world with him corrupt principles and carnal propensities, being so far gone from original righteousness that he is of his own nature inclined to evil. It informs us, that this depravity is so deep that his very thoughts are evil in the sight of God, his mind enmity itself against God, and his heart desperately wicked before God; thus proving, that it is impossible for those who are in the flesh to please God. It informs us that this depravity is universal—that no individual has escaped “the fault and corruption of our nature”—that it is as wide as the empire of the human race; for “all flesh has corrupted God’s way upon the earth.” It informs us that this depravity is invariably manifested in the life—that the tree being evil, the fruit is evil also—that God brings the charge of sin against all mankind; so that, “if we say we have no sin and have not sinned, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” It further informs us, that this depravity is so dangerous to man and so offensive to God, that by nature we are all the children of wrath, having the wrath of God abiding on us. Thus does the gospel teach, that we may see our moral state and the great necessity of salvation. Also, *the provision of salvation*. Thus, the gospel informs us that God has not left man unto the consequences of his depravity; on the contrary, in order to save him from its miseries, he has laid help on one who is mighty to deliver, even his only and beloved Son. It informs us that, for this purpose, the Father spared not his Son; but when, to rescue man from the curse of sin, it became necessary that one should bear the sin of all, and by death make atonement for all, Jesus being the only one qualified to make that atonement, the Father gave him up to the demands of justice and power of death; yea, that his death, in its nature, was

sacrificial; in its effects, answerable unto the design of grace; and, as a propitiation, so acceptable unto God, that through Christ, all the human race may find mercy. Thus does the gospel teach man, that he may be cheered with the hope of and encouraged to seek for salvation. Further, the gospel instructs us concerning *the method of salvation*. It informs us, that though God has so abundantly provided for the salvation of man, yet, by him, none are saved irresistibly—that, on the part of man, there must be a penitent mind, a yielding will, and a believing heart—that true repentance must and will appear in sorrow for past sin, and in an entire abandonment of sin—that a yielding will must be manifested by obedience unto all the commands of God—and that faith must have for its object, Christ crucified, in whose blood there is redemption of soul and forgiveness of sin. Thus does the gospel teach that man may be brought into a state of salvation, and “know him whom to know is life eternal.”

Secondly, *Warnings of his providence*. To the ministry of the gospel many are careless; they neglect it, or they slumber under it; thus the voice of Providence is employed to rouse them to concern. Providence is frequently the voice of God to man, and by this he speaks with power and terror; and beyond the sound of this voice none can go, and all are subject unto its visitations; and by the warnings of Providence the salvation of man is designed of God. For this purpose, *Jehovah warns by dreadful calamities*. Thus the stormy tempest that lifts up the waves of the sea and dashes in pieces the firm-built ship, entombing the crew and passengers in the grave of the deep, is the voice of God unto man; the irresistible blast that spreads desolation and death through the dark mines of the earth, is the voice of God to man; the forked lightning that darts with inconceivable rapidity from the heavens, and shivers the oak of the forest, consumes the cattle of the field, penetrates into the dwelling of man, and in a moment deprives him of being, is the voice of God unto man; and by these calamities mortals are warned

of the absolute power of God. By *prevailing sickness and disease*. Thus God is pleased to visit nations, cities, and neighbourhoods, with mortal malady. The burning fever, the fatal dysentery, and appalling cholera, scatter the arrows of death in all directions, bereaving parents of their beloved children and depriving children of the protection of their affectionate parents; and by these visitations God warns his creatures of their vanity, and teaches them that neither health, strength, nor youth, can secure continued health.—By *sudden death*. A friend, a neighbour, perhaps a relative, in the slumbers of the night, or engaged with the party of pleasure, or amidst the busy bustle of business, is arrested by the cold hand of death, and in a moment numbered with the dead. By these events men are warned of the nearness of death, the danger of delaying a preparation for death, and the advantage of living fully prepared for that solemn hour.

Thirdly, *Influence of his Spirit*. Even the warnings of Providence are overlooked by many, or soon forgotten. God has therefore graciously granted his Spirit to follow men at all times, and into all circumstances, that by it he may work in them his pleasure. The influence of this Spirit is manifested by *convincing men of the evil of sin*. Not only that sin is an evil in its nature, but an evil against the soul—that it cannot be committed but to the soul's injury; so that it is an evil for man to yield unto its power. Thus we are emboldened to assert, that few sin ignorantly; that most, if not all, feel a revolting conscience from sin, and an accusing conscience for sin, and this conscience is of the Spirit. By *drawing men from sin*. Thus, when sin is planned, contemplated, and resolved on, it is the Spirit that cries "avoid it, pass by it, and turn away." When the path of sin is entered, it is the Spirit that again cries, "Let the wicked man forsake his ways;" and to the language of this Spirit, few, if any, are entire strangers. Nor does the Spirit merely speak against sin; he also kindly offers his powerful aid to help man to resist sin. By *reproving men for sin*. Should the convictions of the Spirit

be stifled, and his drawings be withstood, and sin be committed, then the influence of the Spirit is felt in the bitter reflections of guilt, in the piercing anguish of remorse, in the keen upbraidings of conscience for the past, and in the horror and fear which attends the thought of the future; and why these diversified operations of the Holy Spirit? Doubtless, their object is the salvation of man.

Fourthly, *Labours of faithful ministers*. To gather the harvest, reapers are required; and to promote our salvation, God employs ministers who are spiritual reapers. Thus the gospel is not only compared to the plough, and its truths to seed, but ministers to husbandmen and reapers. Under this character they are spoken of by Christ: "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers (reapers) are few." To them, in this character, this promise may be applied: "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." In this character, they are designed of God to be blessings unto the world, by gathering the souls of men into the kingdom of grace. With this blessing in this land we are abundantly favoured of God. Days have been known, even in Britain, when the word of the Lord was so precious that there was no "open vision"—when the heralds of salvation were not found one among many thousand; but in our day the word of the Lord is multiplied, and great is the number of those who publish it; so that all in our land may hear "the joyful sound." Thus we prove the truth of the ancient promise; "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." Our eyes frequently see our teachers—they stately stand on the walls of Zion, blowing the warning trumpet, and proclaiming the offers of peace, beseeching us, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled unto God; and thus they become the savour of life unto life, to all who believe their report, and allow themselves to be drawn by them into the garner of the church.—We observe,

*Secondly, TO PROMOTE OUR SALVATION, WE ARE NOT ONLY FAVOURED OF GOD WITH AN ABUNDANCE OF SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS,*

BUT ALSO WITH NUMEROUS GRACIOUS SEASONS AND FAVOURABLE OPPORTUNITIES.

The summer is the season accounted favourable for the performance of particular works; and with such seasons, in reference to the special work of our salvation, we are graciously favoured of God. For this purpose, he grants,

First, *A summer season of youth.* Though we do not deem it impossible for aged persons to obtain salvation, yet it must be confessed that such events are far from being numerous, and that they are attended with many hinderances. They are hindered by a stubbornness of disposition—a dulness of apprehension—the power of long established habits of evil, and the absence of express promise: but though no promise is given unto the aged, as aged persons, to encourage them to expect the mercy of their offended God, yet the summer season of youth is encouraged by special promise, such as, “Those that seek me early shall find me.” Thus the young are divinely assured that the early dedication of themselves unto God, is highly acceptable in his sight—that it is his pleasure concerning them, and that they will meet with a gracious reception. Again, this summer season is not only favoured with cheering promises, but, in the performance of this duty, the young have not such difficulties to contend with as the aged have; a long course of sin has not spread its baneful influence over their passions and principles; in them there is not so much to be undone, removed, and forgiven as in the aged; nor have they such bitter regrets to feel, nor such desponding thoughts to encounter, as those must have who defer the concerns of their souls unto the winter period of life. This summer season is also generally favoured with the smiles of health, vigour of strength, power of memory, and freedom from anxious care and painful solicitude respecting their worldly circumstances; and all these are favourable to spiritual prosperity. Young people, this is your summer season: work while the gospel sun shines upon you with such meridian glory.

Secondly, *Summer season of affliction.* Dispensations of affliction, however pain-

ful to the body and distressing to the mind, are generally gracious visitations designed of God to promote our spiritual benefit. They afford opportunities for solemn thought, holy meditation, serious inquiry, important reflection, and faithful self-examination. By them we are reminded of our dependence on God—that life and health are at his disposal, and that it is an easy thing with him to bring us down into the dust of death. By them, when rightly exercised, the mind is humbled, the heart is softened, the will brought into submission, and a teachableness of disposition produced. By affliction, many have been brought to repent of their sinful conduct, to call upon God for his mercy, and resolve to amend their ways and their doings, and some from them have dated their new creation. With such summer seasons many present have been favoured. You can call to remembrance when Providence seemed to frown on your path, and you were brought into circumstances of difficulty and distress. You can recollect when certain members of your family were laid on the bed of suffering, and you had reason to fear their sickness would be unto death; yea, when your own bodies were oppressed with pain and weakened by disease, and you appeared to be drawing near unto the eternal world—and why these dispensations? No doubt they were granted of God to work in you salvation, that you, also, might say, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted.”

Thirdly, *Summer season of special visitations of grace.* That nations have been favoured with special spiritual visitations, is a scriptural truth; and that individuals are thus visited, is manifest from general experience. There is scarcely an individual but who has felt, not only what may be termed the ordinary striving of the Spirit of God, but also the very powerful influence of that Spirit; and that, especially in seasons of suffering, in the retirement of solitude, in the ordinances of religion, and under the powerful ministry of the gospel, when they have been filled with fear, roused to concern, melted down with contrition, and mightily drawn to give themselves unto God. Have not

many of you experienced such visitations when "the kingdom of God has come nigh you"—when the powers of the world to come have been tasted by you—when a voice you have distinctly heard, and a voice you clearly understood, said unto you, "This is the accepted time of salvation." Those visitations have been repeated again and again. And why this special influence of divine grace? Doubtless, for the purpose of assisting you to "make your calling and election sure."

*Thirdly, IT IS POSSIBLE FOR SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS AND FAVOURABLE OPPORTUNITIES TO PASS AWAY, AND LEAVE MAN A STRANGER TO SALVATION.* The blessings of the most abundant harvest have an end, and the longest summer comes to a close; so will the blessings and opportunities of salvation, and this they may do and man remain destitute of salvation. This truth is variously confirmed: we observe,

First, *The word of God asserts the truth.* There are few truths more explicitly revealed than this, and doubtless it is revealed with clearness for our solemn warning. In an early age of the world Jehovah declared, "My Spirit shall not alway strive with man." By this scripture it is plainly intimated, that the Spirit of God may be withdrawn from many, with whom he has long strove, and the periods of his strivings have an end. Of this Israel was warned when Jehovah declared, "Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee." And, "Wo also to them when I depart from them." Indeed, were it not possible for them to pass away unimproved, and leave man a stranger to salvation, what can those scriptures mean, which declare the existence of such tremendous circumstances, such as, "Because I have called, and ye refused—I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamities, I will mock when your fear cometh. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."

Secondly, *Numerous facts establish the*

*truth.* We are well aware that there is a disposition in man to call such facts in question, and to conclude, there is such abundant mercy with God that he never has and never will consign an immortal soul to everlasting destruction. But facts, numerous and indisputable, show that blessings and opportunities may pass away unimproved; and when they do so, finally, why should we hesitate to declare, that destruction—endless destruction, must follow? Ask me for facts to prove this awful truth? I refer you to the old world. They had a long and favoured opportunity, all the days Noah was preparing the ark: God was speaking unto them and waiting to save them; but they regarded not his long-suffering grace, and the flood came and brought their blessing and opportunities of salvation to an end. Ask me for facts to prove this awful truth? I refer you to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, in the days of the Redeemer's abode with men. They were blessed with the works, example, and ministry of Christ and his apostles. They saw the wonders which attended the Saviour's death, and they heard of the power of his resurrection, yet what was the ultimate state of thousands? Shall we believe the faithful Amen? Hear, then, his testimony. He wept over Jerusalem, saying, "If thou hadst known, *even thou*, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." Ask me for facts to prove this awful truth? I refer you to many aged persons of the present day, who have had many calls and offers of salvation; but a long life has been spent without God, and now they have sunk into such a state of mental imbecility, that they are not capable of receiving instruction: they have become mentally dead, while dead in trespasses and sins; and where is the promise of salvation unto such? Ask me for facts to prove this awful truth? I refer you unto many hearers of the gospel, who, from the days they were seated on their mother's lap and were led by a father's hand, have been trained to observe holy Sabbaths—to attend the house of God, and sit under the ministry of the

word of life. By the gospel they have been convinced, warned, instructed, and invited; yet, to this moment, they remain strangers unto saving grace. Ask me for facts to prove this awful truth? I refer you to the damned in hell. Many of the inhabitants of perdition were once as you now are—in a state of probation. To them the gospel was preached—on them the providence of God called—with them the Spirit of God strove—and among them the ministers of God diligently laboured. They had summer seasons of youth, of affliction, and special visitation; but death found them in the path of transgression, and now they find themselves with him who once exclaimed, “I am tormented with this flame.” Ask me for facts to confirm this awful truth? Shall I refer you to yourselves? Nay, do not shrink from this personal application of the truth: have none of you cause to take up the lamentation of mourning, and say, We have had many bountiful harvests of blessings, and many bright summer seasons of opportunities; but, alas, “we are not saved!” We observe, once more,

*Fourthly*, THE STATE OF THOSE WHO ARE NOT SAVED BY GRACE IS MOST DEPLORABLE AND PERILOUS. Let us contemplate the wretched condition of such. In doing so, we notice,

*An unsaved state is a state of guilt.* Such are guilty before God, and guilty against God: they have broken his law, and the condemnatory curse of that law rests upon them. They are impure in his sight, and he cannot behold iniquity with pleasure. It is offensive to his nature—that “abominable thing which his soul hates.”

*An unsaved state is a state of misery.* Real happiness is only to be found in the light of God’s countenance; but “the face of the Lord is against them who do evil;” and where he frowns misery must dwell: so that the unsaved from sin must be strangers unto happiness. Ask them, Have they joy? “It is like the crackling of thorns under a pot.” Ask them, Have they rest? “They are like the troubled sea which cannot rest!” Ask them, Have they peace? “There is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked.”

*An unsaved state is a state of danger.* Not merely of temporal calamities, however tremendous—of bodily death, however painful; but the danger of the wrath of God, who is terrible in majesty—the danger of eternal judgment, which cannot be conceived—the danger of the death of the soul, that death which never dies. In a word, unsaved by grace from the dominion of sin, man is every moment in danger of the eternal curse and consequences of sin. So that an unsaved state is, of all others, the most deplorable and alarming. Let us now,

*Fifthly*, APPLY THESE IMPORTANT TRUTHS. In doing so, we would consider the language of this scripture as the language of,

First, *Penitential regret*—regret for having abused such precious blessings and neglected such favourable opportunities. And who can reflect on the worth of the soul, its fallen condition, the misery it is in, and how near it is unto eternal misery—who can reflect on the suitability of the blessings of salvation to raise the soul from its fallen state, and secure its endless happiness—who can reflect, that a soul so circumstanced, and blessings so valuable, have been neglected and despised, without regret? Such folly and such wickedness should humble us into the dust, and move a heart of stone to contrition. We tremble for the safety of those who can review God’s great goodness, and their great vileness, without deep compunction of mind. We trust, therefore, that you are saying, with feelings of regret, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we regret that we are not saved.”

Secondly, *Awakened fear*—the fear of a person who discovers his danger, and is concerned about it. And well may this discovery occasion fear—a fear that God, justly displeased with the abuse of past mercies, should henceforward withhold his mercy—a fear lest the horrors of an unsaved state should speedily come upon them. Such conduct on the part of man has merited such abandonment from God. And do you not fear, you who know you are not saved by grace?—you who are assured, from the word of God, that with-

out salvation you must perish for ever? And can you contemplate your danger of eternal destruction with indifference? God forbid! Rather, we hope, from real concern, you are saying, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we fear for our safety, for we are not saved."

Thirdly, *Serious inquiry*—the inquiry of those who are anxious to learn whether salvation is yet possible—who are saying, "Can I, after abusing so much goodness—after placing myself in such circumstances of jeopardy, yet obtain salvation?" Thanks to the long-suffering grace of God, it is possible. Your harvest blessings are yet continued—your summer of life is not yet closed. This, with you, is not the inquiry of eternity, but of time. You may be saved, for ministers invite you—the Spirit of God strives with you; you may be saved, for the blood of Christ pleads for you, and the arms of mercy are wide open to receive you; you may be saved, for unto you the word of salvation is sent—sent, because God waiteth to be gracious—sent, to assure you that "God hath not appointed you to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." Is, then, your inquiry, "Though many harvests are past, and many summers have ended, can we yet be saved?" We reply to you, salvation is possible, and near.

Fourthly, *Affectionate warning*.—It warns you, that your privileges are passing away—your time is consuming—that your careless conduct is inexcusable—and that your eternal destiny will soon be fixed. It warns you, that, as the great work your hand findeth to do is the saving of your souls, you should do that work mightily, and immediately; making haste and not delaying to enter into a state of salvation. It warns you, that the delay of a week or a day may prove fatal: it warns you, that this sermon may be your last blessing—that this ordinance may be your last favourable season—and that the sun of your last summer may have risen upon you: considerations which should lead you to pray, "Lord, so teach me to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom."

Fifthly, We inquire, *Is the text descrip-*

*tive of your state?* Are you of the number of the unsaved? Reflect on that state. Unserved, what are you? The servants of Satan, the enemies of God, the neglecters of Christ, and resisters of the Holy Spirit. Unserved, where are you? In the gall of bitterness, in the broad way of destruction, on the awful verge of perdition. Unserved, what are you doing? You are destroying your own souls, rejecting the kingdom of heaven, and making eternal death sure. Unserved, where are you going? Your path may appear wide, pleasant, and easy; but look to the end of it! See, see! it terminates in hell! Being unserved, are you satisfied with yourselves, your state, and your prospects? Satisfied without an interest in Christ? Satisfied without a title to heaven? Satisfied under the sentence of eternal death? Surely not. But should any be so satisfied, we address them in the language of the Holy Spirit, "Awake, thou that sleepest;" for, if you do not thus awake, in eternity, in the language of fixed and black despair, you will have to exclaim, "The harvest of God's bounty is for ever past, the summer of his mercy has for ever ended, and we must for ever remain unserved."

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REV. JOHN FLETCHER'S PREACHING.

ON my occasional visits, I was struck with several things. Preaching on Noah as a type of Christ, he was in the midst of a most animated description of the terrible day of the Lord, when he suddenly paused. Every feature of his expressive countenance was marked with painful feeling; and, striking his forehead with the palm of his hand, he exclaimed, "Wretched man that I am! Beloved brethren, it often cuts me to the soul, as it does at this moment, to reflect, that while I have been endeavouring by the force of truth, by the beauty of holiness, and even by the terrors of the Lord, to bring you to walk in the peaceable paths of righteousness, I am, with respect to many of you who reject the gospel, only tying millstones round your neck, to sink you deeper in perdition!" The whole church was electrified, and it

was some time before he could resume the subject.

On another occasion, after the morning service, he asked if any of the congregation could give him the address of a sick man whom he was desired to visit. He was answered, "He is dead, sir." "Dead! dead!" he exclaimed; "Another soul launched into eternity! What can I do for him now! Why, my friends, will you so frequently serve me in this manner? I am not informed you are ill, till I find you dying, or hear that you are dead!" Then sitting down, he covered his head with his gown; and when the congregation had retired, he walked home buried in sorrow, as though he had lost a friend or a brother.

All of Mr. Fletcher's opponents were able, and most of them humorous writers. This circumstance frequently obliged him, contrary to the habitual gravity of his character, to encounter them with their own weapons; and this perhaps made him pass for a *bitter* writer with those who could not bear to see their own sentiments treated with the same freedom with which they treat those of a contrary description. They who wish to judge according to truth would do well to read Mr. Fletcher's works before they censure him; and to bear in mind that the respect due to truth will justify a degree or freedom with doctrine, which esteem and love will not allow towards the persons of its advocates. I will not recriminate on his respectable opponents; but relate an anecdote which will exhibit his patience and gentleness under severe and rude censures. When apparently in dying circumstances at Bristol, a dissenting minister called upon him. Though he had been forbidden to converse, and the gentleman was a stranger, Mr. Fletcher admitted and received him with his usual courtesy. But the visiter, instead of conversing on such subjects as were suitable to Mr. Fletcher's Christian character and afflicted circumstances, entered warmly on controversy; and told him, "He had better have been confined to his bed with a dead palsy, than have written so many bitter things against the dear children of God." "My brother," said

Mr. Fletcher, "I hope I have not been bitter. Certainly I did not mean to be so: but I wanted more love then, and I feel I want more now." This mild answer silenced him; and sent him away, I trust, better acquainted with Mr. Fletcher's spirit, and his own. They are not generally of the best spirits themselves, who are first to complain of the spirits of their opponents.

On his way to Ireland Mr. Fletcher preached in a large town; and towards the conclusion of his sermon stated his sentiments respecting the eminent degree of holiness to which a Christian might attain in this life. All the ministers of the place attended to hear him; and all but one stayed to shake him by the hand after the service. That one was the principal clergyman, a polished gentleman and an old acquaintance. In the morning Mr. Fletcher, who suspected no offence, said to Mr. Gilbert, "I had not the pleasure last night of shaking hands with my friend Mr. —, I cannot think of quitting the town without seeing him. As you are acquainted with him, perhaps you will walk with me." They accordingly called, and were introduced: but when he presented his hand with his usual respectful cordiality, it was rudely declined. "I never preach any thing," said his friend, "but what I experience. Do you, Mr. Fletcher, experience that eminent degree of holiness, that *Christian perfection*, which you spoke of last night?" Unprepared for discussion, especially with an angry disputant, he answered mildly, "My dear brother, we serve the same blessed Lord; why then should we disagree because our liveries are not turned up exactly alike?" Finding his friend still rude and repulsive, he suddenly caught his hand, kissed it, and bowing low, said, "God bless you, my brother," and retired. It is creditable to the religious principles of this gentleman, that Mr. Fletcher's patient kindness was not without effect. On his return from Ireland his friend called upon him, asked his pardon in the handsomest terms, and treated him with the most respectful distinction. — *Communicated by the Rev. Melville Horne.*

## SERMON XVI.

HUMAN AND SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE.

BY THE REV. S. ROBINS.

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“*In much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.*”—Ecl. i. 18.

IT is highly important that we should keep in mind, as well in respect of the declarations of Scripture, as of the maxims of mere temporal and secular concernment, that many things which, in one point of their application, are altogether undeniable, may in another point be contrary to reason and experience; that many positions which, up to a certain limit, are true beyond all question, may, if strained, and urged beyond that limit, become as evidently untrue. The words of the text may serve as an illustration of this principle. The intended application is clearly of limited extent; if it were universal, it would involve a paradox; and it would assert that which is contrary not only to the testimony of our own minds, but to the plain statements which are made in many other places of the word of God. There is wisdom which bringeth no grief; and there is knowledge whose increase implies no increase of sorrow. We shall find in the Bible no plea for ignorance. “That the soul be without knowledge it is not good,” is the declaration of Scripture; and they are rendering a mighty disservice to religion, who represent it as disconnected with the cultivation of the mental powers. Of all the gifts which the Lord has bestowed upon his creatures, none ranks higher, or involves weightier responsibility, than the gift of intellect. No endowment with which He has invested them can be ranged in its importance above that, by which man is separated, and marked off, from the lower creation, and by which he is made to differ from the beasts that perish.

On the great reckoning day, when the debt book is opened, and we are held to account for the employment of even the lowest faculties with which we have been gifted; that will surely not be overlooked, or unheeded, which is the distinguishing prerogative of our nature, and by which we are adapted to study the attributes of God, and to serve and glorify him for ever. The talent must be used, not laid by; it must be put out to interest, not hidden in a napkin nor buried in the earth.

It is, indeed, a high and noble thing to consecrate our minds, with all their best and brightest faculties, to him who bestowed them for his own service. There is no finer spectacle than that which is presented by the man of science, who searches the records of creation, written in characters which no time can obliterate, and on a page which no changes can efface; and fetches in from them proofs of the character, and illustrations of the dealings and doings of Deity; who, while he listens to the voice which they utter in his ear, acts as nature’s interpreter for nature’s God, and brings forth evidences of everlasting truth wherewith to put to silence the cavils of the objector. Or one who has become familiar with the languages of other lands, may dedicate this power also to a holy service, and make it the means of extending the limits of the Redeemer’s kingdom, by sending forth the tidings of salvation through his blood, to the nations which have long been sitting in darkness and the shadow of death. While another who is strong in argument, and able to detect fallacious reasoning,

and to give force to truth, will find no topics in the defence of which he may better or more satisfactorily spend his intellectual strength than those which the gospel furnishes forth. And if there even were a period, when it was laid with the weight of a special duty upon the people of God, to improve to the utmost their mental faculties for his service, it is the period in which our lot is cast. The apostles of infidelity are abroad, and are doing their master's work with unceasing and unwearying devotedness. There are subtle and keen witted men, who have rendered themselves up to the one unholy design of pulling down the fabric of pure and undefiled religion; and while they are putting forth all the powers of cultivated minds for the achievement of their purpose, it is surely the time when the servants of the cross should keep their intellectual armour bright and burnished. The days are at hand when there will be a yet fiercer conflict between the principles of good and evil; when the struggle for the mastery will be yet more tremendous; when they who love the Lord Jesus Christ cannot remain in neutrality, but must contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, in promulgating which apostles laboured, and in the defence of which martyrs braved the scaffold and the stake. We do not doubt the issue of the great contest, because we know that the might of Omnipotence is engaged on our side, and that the word of Him who cannot be unfaithful is pledged to his church. But we have no warrant to look for a special blessing, while we commit the protection of our Zion to unpractised hands; while we intrust the defence of our spiritual citadel to men who possess zeal indeed, but not according to knowledge. The church of Christ has probably suffered not less from its professed friends, than from its avowed enemies; and without charging hypocrisy or deception upon all of the former class who have done injury to the great cause of truth, we blame them that they have so often suffered the mind to lie fallow and untilled; and have counted it a small thing to leave in abeyance the intellectual endowments with the use of which they

have been charged. They would take the things of the gospel out of the sphere of reason, and confine them altogether to the regions of feeling and affection. Hence it is, that while the truth is overspread and obscured by multiform delusions; while frantic claims to special inspiration are asserted, in maintenance of wild, and extravagant, and antisciptural doctrines, we are told the case is one to which the ordinary process by which error is refuted, cannot be applied: it is in vain that unanswerable arguments are urged, the expected result does not follow, but occasion is still given to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, and the hearts of those who love his name are depressed and saddened, as they see one and another of the weaker brethren made to stumble, and wander from the narrow way. The apostolical injunction to be "ready to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in us," is addressed not only to the distinguished and highly gifted champions of gospel truth, but it belongs with as much directness and force of application, to those whose position is far lower, and whose attainments are of a far meaner order. If we would be kept from imbibing erroneous opinions which must hinder our own souls, and may be the cause of hinderance to others, we must bring the powers of reason to bear upon the subjects of revelation, in a simple and prayerful dependence upon the Spirit, without whose teaching, indeed, human powers could not avail for the discovery of the least fragments of divine truth. Such an employment of mind, the words which I have chosen for our present topic, are far, indeed, from discouraging. And in order to set this matter before you with more clearness and precision, I will consider, in the *first* place, SOME OF THE CASES IN WHICH THE APPLICATION OF THE TEXT IS UNDENIABLE; and, in the *second* place, SOME OF THOSE IN WHICH NO APPLICATION OF IT CAN BE MADE.

As to the first head of our subject, we may say, in general and compendious terms, that *the text applies to all the acquisitions of knowledge which are independent of God, and from which consi-*

derations of the soul and of eternity are excluded. The limitation of the sphere of human science must necessarily produce dissatisfaction and disappointment. When it has been urged to its farthest extent, its discoveries are but mean and ignoble in comparison of what remains yet unknown; its acquisitions are little worth, when contrasted with the extent of the field, which can never be brought within its grasp and compass. If it be applied to the objects and operations of external nature, it soon reaches the boundary line beyond which its investigations cannot advance. It may accumulate facts, and, by a careful and precise induction, form a system; connecting together various phenomena, it may pronounce of one class, that they are cause, and of another, that they are effect; but of their mode of influence, or of the exact relation which they bear to each other, nothing is known. And if science be applied to trace out the machinery and operations of our own minds, the result is still less satisfactory. One generation of metaphysicians builds up a system which another generation employs itself to pull down and to destroy.

1st. *Human knowledge is confined within narrow limits in point of time.* The present is that which it can alone claim. The annals of past ages convey falsehoods intermingled with truth; so that the most patient and unwearied research cannot distinguish between fact and fiction: and infinitely the larger portion of the transactions which have occupied the millions of mankind, have obtained no record, and have left no memorial. Of the mighty future, which lies beyond the boundary of time; of that inconceivably long existence, to which the present life forms but the commencement and the vestibule, unassisted reason can make no discovery. There hath no voice come to us but the voice of revelation and of God, to tell us of our own everlasting destiny; and it must remain wrapped in concealment and mystery to him who rejects this teaching. He may have toiled patiently and unweariedly, and he may have been pointed at with the finger, as the wisest among the wise; but unless he has been

taught in a better school, he knows nothing of eternity; and all the acquisitions by which he has been distinguished from his fellows, will have no bearing upon its weighty concerns. "Whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away: whether there be tongues, they shall cease." He may have taken larger strides than his contemporaries, in the field of human attainments; and he may be able to illustrate his chosen subjects with such eloquence that riveted attention hangs upon his words; but, in spite of the admiration which he excited, he must soon go down to the quiet chamber of the grave; the tongue which spoke with such force and persuasion will be put to silence; the distinction which he earned by mental superiority must cease, and his very name will, after a few generations, be forgotten.

2d. But there are circumstances in which sorrow more directly tracks the footprints of that wisdom which is of the earth. The annals of human science, the history of students in human learning, might furnish forth many a heartrending page. We might read of many a one, who, having ardently pursued the object which seemed to promise most of reputation and advancement, has derived from his pursuit only the keenness of disappointment and the bitterness of a broken heart. At this time, and within the compass of this crowded city, you might go into many a chamber where the scholar is consuming life itself in the acquirement of knowledge which will not profit him. You might see the sad spectacle of such a one sinking to an untimely tomb, because he followed his one object too intently and too devotedly; labouring during the day, and stealing hours from repose, that he might spend his waning strength over the nightly lamp; until the hectic colour settles upon his pale sunken cheek; till, with wasted limbs, and unstrung nerves, he bears in the aspect of his emaciated form the evidence of premature decay. And while he is sacrificing so much for intellectual distinction, he is keenly and painfully sensible of neglect. He feels himself a lonely and forsaken creature. The world

is too busy to mark his doings; mankind are too much occupied by their own several engagements, to care for his success. Others there are of firmer temperament and bolder spirit, who are rising to distinction, and grasping the splendid rewards which society has to bestow: they are better suited to struggle with the world; and, though they may belong to a far inferior class of minds, they have battled with the stream, and have planted their feet upon the vantage ground, on which his eye and his hope have long been vainly fixed. He goes down to his grave; and with him may be buried the bright expectations of parents, who, with the willing credulity of the heart, believed no object too high for his attainment; or the last hopes of his own home circle to whom he was the centre of affection and delight. This ardent pursuit of knowledge, this uncheered and unmitigated toil, has destroyed many a life. And if there be no revelation of the truth of God to the heart; if no dawning of spiritual day hath broken upon the darkness of the soul; if the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ has never come with its converting and healing power, it is not easy to imagine a death-bed more uncheered and unhappy. The man feels, when he is dying, that a deceived heart has turned him aside; he sees that he has been labouring for that which is not bread; that he has been spending life, with all its energies, devoting the mind, with all its bright and powerful faculties, for that which could not satisfy the soul, nor comfort his spirit in the hour of need.

3d. *Human knowledge, while it is un-sanctified by grace, tends to lead us away from God.* We may become so absorbed in the contemplation of the Creator's works; in tracing the various processes through which they pass, and the various laws to which they are subject, as to forget the high attributes of the Creator himself. We may be so engrossed by the gifts which he has bestowed with a free and liberal hand, as to be altogether forgetful of the bounteous Giver. It is a saddening proof of the ingratitude of the heart, and of the utter depravity to which our nature has fallen, that the very facul-

ties of mind, the lofty and noble endowments which the Lord has bestowed, are so often made the means of widening the gulf of separation which divides us from him. We may embark so ardently in the cause of human wisdom, that, while we advance, step by step, to higher and more envied attainments, we may, in exactly the same degree, be travelling into a region of remoteness from God; and while we use his gifts for the achievement of our present purpose, we may consign to inconsideration the condition of responsibility which he has annexed, and from which we cannot finally escape, that they should be used to his glory, in the promotion of his own everlasting purposes. The effect will be to keep us far from God, since the pride which chambers itself in the natural heart, and rises in determined hostility against the humbling doctrines of the cross, will be increased by continual accessions; and as we advance successfully in the acquirements of human knowledge, we shall be tempted to compare ourselves with those of meaner attainments, from whose ranks we have stepped forward, and wanting the counterbalance of grace in the heart, we shall be further removed from the simplicity of that childlike spirit, in which it is required that we should go as learners into the school of Jesus Christ.

4th. *To be thus turned aside from him who is the source of present blessing and eternal hope, will sooner or later be felt to be an evil and a bitter thing.* It issues not unfrequently in yet more disastrous effects. The mind which has been so deeply engaged in following the discoveries of science, and gathering stores of intellectual treasure, in ways which it has shaped out independently of God, may at length, in the uncurbed pride of reason, reject the evidence for the truth of his revealed word; may deny his providential interference in the transactions of the earth; and, plunging yet deeper in the abyss of unbelief, may join the fool of old, in denying his very existence. If there be a human creature whose condition might well excite profounder pity than that of others, it is he who, being a wanderer in the wilderness, has quenched

in his soul the light which would have guided him on his way; who, being born to an inheritance of sorrow, has closed against himself the only well-spring of abiding comfort. Such a one may not only present the fearful spectacle of infidelity in his own person, but, with an unholy devotedness, he may use his influence and his talents in perverting the faith of others, and making them the same in their unbelief as he has himself become. But while he is thus doing the work of the great enemy of mankind, he is also preparing the way for consequences which he neither expected nor desired. He may pride himself upon the strict integrity which is stamped upon his dealings; the carefulness and consistency with which he performs the offices of his station; and the respectability and unimpeached credit with which he bears himself in the relations of social life; but while he is conveying the subtle poison of his opinions to the minds of others, he cannot predict the effects in which they may result. The young and intellectual, upon whom he had taken pains to fasten his opinions, may not be able to exercise the same mastery over their passions, and to restrain so successfully the outbreak of evil propensities, when the curb of religious principle has been withdrawn, and the outworks of morality have been beaten down. Having become infidel in opinion, they may become debauched in practice; following out, in their natural result, the principles to which they have been proselyted, they may become such as their companions learn to pity or scorn, and such as society desires to weed out of its pale. He who with so much assiduity converted them to his views, may be yet in the fulness of his own unchecked prosperity; but his heart will be wrung with anguish as he marks the blight and the ruin which he caused, but which he cannot remedy. And when his own evil day comes upon him, when his leaf is sere and yellow, and the blossom of his life is gone, he will feel the full bitterness of a desolate spirit. There may be times when memory will call up early recollections, and go back to the days when he had not yet learned to call the gospel

the fable of the nurse, and the delusion of the priest; the days of unspoiled and unperverted childhood, when in the holy observances of a pious family circle, the morning and evening prayer was offered by those into whose hearts no doubt had ever entered, that the living God was their guardian and provider, or that Jesus had clothed himself with their nature, and had borne the burden of their sins upon the cross. There may be the remembrance of the peace which then dwelt in his bosom, and has never since been lodged there, and with this remembrance there may be a momentary stir of slumbering affections, and a gushing forth of long-forgotten feelings; but the heart has been too long hardened, and the mind too much warped, to dwell on scenes and recollections like these. Yet, as he compares the present with the past, he may feel that he has made but an ill exchange. Just as we may conceive the habitual drunkard, whose pleasures have long been those of the wine-cup and the midnight revel, looking back to the days when his limbs did not totter with premature weakness, nor his pulse throb with habitual fears; when he could stoop in the midst of the pleasures, and exercises, and labours of youth, and bathe his brow and quench his thirst in the crystal stream. He remembers the past, but the power of simple and unblamed enjoyment is gone.

5th. *But for the man who has lived in proud defiance of God, there will come a season when he will reap a fuller harvest of disappointment and sorrow.* When he is shut up in his death-chamber, and is preparing to pillow his head in the sepulchre, the evidence for the existence and the interposition of Deity, which he laboured so long to resist and to exclude, will rush upon him with overwhelming force. He may have lived, but he cannot die an infidel. The God whom he renounced, and the restraints of whose authority he set himself to cast away, will make his terrors to be felt. It is nothing, in his present extremity, that he has been distinguished among his contemporaries, and that his name has been emblazoned high in the records of learning and science. On all

these things he will now see vanity inscribed. They cannot soothe the unquietness of bodily suffering, nor lift the burden from the self-accusing conscience. He will feel, at length, that in his much wisdom hath been much grief, and in the increase of his knowledge hath been increase of sorrow. He hath treasured up evil for the latter day, and has laid upon his own soul the bitterness of anguish, which found him out at the last.

6th. *And that which is true of individuals, is not less true of communities.* If it be a dangerous thing for a man to cultivate intellectual accomplishments, at the expense of personal piety, no less is it hazardous, that religion should be dissociated from knowledge, in the prevailing schemes for the instruction of a people. And among all the features of the time which cause anxiety to those who are careful for future days, and who tremble for the generation who are to follow, there is none which threatens more disaster and calamity than the growing pride which, irrespective of the claims of the Creator, would deify the intellect of the fallen creature. The men of the new philosophy are at work, who are content that the people should be of any religion, or of no religion, provided only, that stores of perishable wisdom be accumulated. With them is leagued the cold skeptic, whose weapon is sarcasm, and whose ready argument lies in a sneer; who, if knowledge be but diffused, would not complain though the altar should be polluted and overthrown. And we cannot doubt that the old enemy of human souls, who made the tree of knowledge the instrument of his earliest temptation, is busily employed in helping forward plans which bid so fair for the advancement of his kingdom. If the flood shall not overwhelm us, and shall not sweep away whatever of holy and excellent yet remains; if the monuments of ancient piety, which have come down to us from a God-fearing ancestry, which the heart loves to cherish, and on which the eye loves to linger, are yet spared to us, it will be only through the undeserved interposition of Him, whom, as a nation, we are schooling ourselves to renounce.

But let us now pass on to consider, briefly, in the *second* place, SOME OF THE CASES IN WHICH NO APPLICATION OF THE TEXT CAN BE MADE.

1st. *It cannot be applied to the knowledge of ourselves, and of the condition to which our nature has fallen.* No acquisition is more important, for it lies at the threshold of all spiritual advancement; none more difficult, for the heart is deceitful above all things, as well as desperately wicked. The evidences of sin are around us on every side. The wreck and ruin of creation proclaim what it has done. Its disastrous effects are visible, even to the heedless eye, in the blight and wretchedness which it has cast upon a world, which, with all its furniture and all its tenants, God, at first, pronounced very good. But it is chiefly in its consequences to our own nature, that we should seek the evidences of the deadly work which sin hath wrought. It lurks, however, so deeply in the hidden and unexplored recesses of the heart, it is so contained in its concealment, that, while we are borne down by its effects, the cause escapes our observation. Even when the pressure of bodily pain wrings the groan of anguish from the bosom, or adversity makes us poor and unprovided, or bereavement makes us desolate in spirit, we often remain ignorant of the rod of bitterness, from which every human sorrow has sprung. If sin be indeed such, in its character or measures, as to excite scorn and avoidance in those with whom we are bound up in the intercourse of common life, we may feel it to be an evil thing. But, if we have earned respect by the strict moralities of a consistent course; if our words have weight in the decision of others, and our example has influence among men of integrity and reputation, it is hard to persuade ourselves that there may yet lie as wide an interval of separation between us and God as that which divides him from the most reprobate and reckless of sinners. Nature resists the admission; we can learn its necessity only by the teaching of the Spirit, which unfolds our moral history, and shows us to ourselves. Such knowledge is blessed in its results, when

we come in the brokenness of a self-distrusting and self-abasing heart, to seek other help and other merit than our own. Ere we can attain to it, we must become fools, in order to be wise; for, if any man thinketh that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know it.

2d. *The declaration of the text cannot be applied to the knowledge of God.* No subject on which the intellectual faculties can spend themselves is so elevating and ennobling as the character of him who bestowed them. We shall never, indeed, master the mighty subject, nor hold it within the compass of our minds, nor grapple with the inconceivable magnitude of its details. Neither can angels accomplish this by the devotion of all their immortal energies. And yet the Lord hath published records of himself, on many a bright and glowing page, which it is our privilege to read. He hath not, indeed, left himself without witness. The whole world teems with God. The meanest objects on which the eye can rest are eloquent of him, and bear their concurrent testimony to the lines of his eternal character. But no contemplation of God, out of Christ, can give comfort to the heart which has become conscious of transgression of his law. Every divine attribute is gathered in tremendous array. Holiness turns with loathing from the guilt which Omniscience detects; Justice claims its victim, and Omnipotence is ready to punish with the outpouring of irresistible vengeance. The revelation of the power of the gospel is the only revelation of peace to the heart. It is the one blessed scheme by which, while all the attributes have their complete and awful vindication, the overture of free pardon is made to those whom sin has ruined and rendered helpless. We bless God that not even the veriest outcast, not even the vilest among the children of sin and shame, can come in vain to plead their cause in mercy's presence chamber. Not a single individual of the human family, who shall fall under the condemnation of the great day, will be able to urge, in arrest of the righteous sentence, that he desired to participate in the blood-bought pardon, but was left in the hopelessness

of unforgiven transgression. To know God, as he is revealed in the gospel record of his love to a ruined world, is to open the inlets of comfort to the soul. A martyr in our own land, who was going to bear his testimony amidst the flames to the truths of the gospel, opened his Testament for the last time, and prayed that he might be pointed to some passage whose strong consolation might carry him through the appalling terrors of the scene which awaited him; God directed him to a text, which was the last upon which his eye rested. "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." And for many a saint, in his hardest conflict, and in his direst extremity, has this blessed truth sufficed. If we know God as our reconciled Father, all is well. We may be carried over dark and troubled waters, but we shall be safe in the ark in which the Lord has shut us in; the tempest may sweep across the sky, but its violence cannot harm us, for we shall have found a haven.

But if Scripture knowledge is to produce such effects, it must never be separated from grace. This separation is one of the dangers which specially belong to a period of so much religious profession as the present. It is no breach of charity to believe that there are many persons who pore on the pages of the Bible, and have become familiar with its statements, over whose lives and conversation its principles have never exercised any perceptible control. It falls within the limits of an easily imagined possibility, that we might gather from the Bible opinions of faultless accuracy, and frame a creed so scriptural that its articles could not be impugned; and yet, that while we were distinguished by an unwavering maintenance of such a creed, and were noted for sturdy partisanship of such an adopted system, we might be as far from the kingdom of God as if we had never heard the sound of the gospel, and no ray of truth had dawned upon the darkness of the soul. We can never become wise unto salvation, unless we go with the outpouring of humble hearts, to seek better guidance than our own, to ask

for the gracious influences of the Spirit, whose office it is to convince of sin, and to subdue the hostility of the carnal mind, as well as to open the difficulties of the revealed word.

There is no necessary connexion between the gifts of the Spirit and the attainments of human learning; no confinement of the blessings of spiritual knowledge to men whose minds are furnished with other stores. God often hides these things from the wise and prudent, and reveals them unto babes. Many a tenant of the mud-built cottage is able to lay hold of the hope of immortality with firmness of grasp, which the ancient philosopher and the modern skeptic could never attain. He may be able to tell nothing of the more abstruse and recondite evidences of his religion, but he can produce the evidence which never fails to satisfy his own heart, which he derives from the complete and wonderful adaptation of the gospel to his wants. It found him poor, and has left him rich; it found him ignorant, it has made him wise; he was by nature a sin-polluted and a sin-ruined creature, and the gospel has shown him how his sin has been atoned for, its guilt for ever put away, the sentence of its condemnation cancelled, and its power curbed and restrained. And God may often make such a one, though untaught in schools, to be the instrument of conversion to the wise of this world. Even many a minister, on whose labours abundant success has rested, might bear his testimony, that he was first guided by Providence to such a lowly disciple, from whom he might gather much precious instruction in the realities of his religion, which he never learned in colleges and halls.

Such knowledge continually increases. As the believer goes on his way, he gradually discovers more of the will and the dealings of his Father. At first there might have been much of zeal, and less of knowledge; but, while the former burns as brightly as when it was first kindled in his bosom, the latter is increased by continual accessions. It may

be that, as he draws near the close of his journey, and even when he is laid upon his dying bed, God may reveal to him many things which, in his best and brightest hours, he had never been able to discern. Just as we may have seen how the ray of closing light brings into view distant objects, some village spire, or stately building upon the remote horizon, which the eye sought in vain, until the sun was sinking behind the western hills.

This knowledge shall not only form the staple of our earthly happiness, but shall outlast the span of our present existence, and reach forward into the outlying region of eternity. We doubt not that heaven will contain whatever of unimagined beauty, and grandeur, and sublimity can gladden the eye; that it will include whatever can call forth the warm affection of hearts, over which sin shall no longer have any control; but neither can we doubt that heaven will be in the highest degree a place of intellect. The redeemed will make continual acquisitions of knowledge. It may be that the range of their observation will be indefinitely enlarged; that they may gaze with undazzled eye upon all the works of God, as they lie open to their view, through the wide extent of worlds and systems; and that they may look back on the mighty designs which He has been rolling on from the beginning of time. Many a dark dispensation will be made clear; and as they trace the harmony between the administration of Providence and the dealings of grace, they will see how all things have been working together for good to the people of the Lord. And as they travel on their pathway of light, they will have for their companions the unfallen spirits, who will consecrate their lofty faculties to unroll the mysteries of divine love which they desire to look into. And God shall advance his glorified saints by continual revelations of himself. Increasing knowledge shall be an element of that blessedness which, for aught we know, may increase in the same proportion for ever.

## SERMON XVII.

THE SIN AND PUNISHMENT OF ACHAN.

BY THE REV. R. P. BUDDICOM, M.A., F.A.S.

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*“And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me. And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent.”—Josh. vii. 19—21.*

“Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.” It is an essential part of charity to abstain from any line of conduct which may be detrimental to those around us. Unhappily this duty is too frequently viewed in a partial and inadequate light.

Had Achan been asked, whether he desired to bring defeat and death into the camp and armies of Israel, he would probably have spurned at the question. Yet, while he gratified his sordid avarice with the Babylonish garment, and the shekels of silver, and the wedge of gold, he sharpened the sword of the men of Ai against his brethren, and charged his soul with the guilt of their slaughter in the battle. Even thus the consequences of individual sin fall, not only upon the offender, but, in some degree, upon the society to which he belongs.

This frequent connexion between the guilt of a transgressor, and the sufferings of those who are innocent of his offence, may be ordered by the Most High, among other beneficent ends, to make us more vigilant over ourselves and each other; that we may neither wound the members of that spiritual body with which we are united, nor bring dishonour upon its glorified Head. Such a holy caution is evidently taught in the history before us, which comprises,

*First, THE SIN OF ACHAN.*

*Second, HIS PUNISHMENT.*

*First,* The word of the Lord had doomed Jericho to absolute ruin. Its inhabitants were to be slain; its silver and gold, its vessels of brass and iron, were to be consecrated to the Lord, and laid up in his treasury, as witnesses of the awful manner in which he had vindicated the glory of his name, and the terrors of his justice. Every man of Israel was warned to keep himself from the accursed thing, lest he should make himself accursed by the taking of it, and make the camp of Israel also a curse, and trouble it. In defiance, however, of this precept, so plainly, so solemnly enforced, did Achan, as he went through the city to execute the decree of God, permit himself to be tempted by a splendid robe, embroidered in the looms of Babylon, by some shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold, to transgress the commandment of the Lord, and to commit a sacrilege against the Most High.

The conduct of every offender against the divine law resembles that of Achan. He is surrounded by incitements to sin; but each transgression is marked with the impress of a divine prohibition, and branded as an accursed thing, too plainly to be mistaken; and infallibly communicates of that curse to those who wilfully touch it. When the temptation is the

most strong or seductive, a handwriting like that upon the wall of Belshazzar's palace appears, to deter the endangered soul, and testifies, "Because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience; be not ye, therefore, partakers with them." But the god of this world blinds the eyes of those who believe not the declarations of the God of truth, and leads them thus to ruin.

There are some circumstances in the confession of Achan, marking the progress of sin, from its first entrance into the heart, to its outward commission, which may serve as the history of almost every offence committed against the law of God, the soul of the transgressor, and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Bear with me while I lay them before you; that, under the teaching and influence of the Holy Spirit, ye may at once discover the danger by which ye are beset, and the means of escape from it.

First, *An undue familiarity with things forbidden was the first cause of Achan's downfall.* "I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight." That man must walk through life without eyes, or passions, without the exercise of reason, or the kindlings of affection, who, amidst the numberless evils of this perverted world, never looks upon, nor is solicited by an occasion of sin. Every one must rather pass, like the Israelites among the spoils of Jericho, through objects strongly exciting him to offend against the decree of God, and take possession of some gratification, which will bring the wrath and curse of the Lord upon him. Temptations to sin will look bright and captivating, as the garment, and the silver and gold glittered before the eye of Achan. And that same deceitfulness of sin, which opens the eye wide to gaze upon the exterior attraction of an accursed thing, by some mysterious mechanism, closes the ear to the rebukes of conscience, or to the denunciations of God. The eye is the great inlet to that mischief which works upon the heart. There is no safety, except in imitating Job, by

making a covenant with our eyes, that we should not admit evil desires through them, to pollute and defile us. The senses must be kept under due restraint; and the prayer of David should often rise to our lips: "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken me in thy way." Let the Lord, O Christian, be always before thee, if thou wouldst walk safely. Then "let thine eyes look right onward, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee." Turn neither to the right hand, nor to the left, lest "the lust of the eyes" insure thee.

Secondly, *Inattention to this important caution occasioned a mournful progress in the guilt of Achan.* Undue admiration was productive of sinful desire. "When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them." The moral law of God forbids the commission of all evil, whether against him, or our neighbour. The spiritual explanation of the Saviour has also shown, that the commandments may be broken, without the actual transgression; that murder may be the enmity of the spirit, and adultery the impurity of the heart. But even the literal precept discovers the mind of God in this respect: and while the first nine commandments forbid, with his voice, any unholiness practice; the tenth, which cries, "Thou shalt not covet," lays the axe to the root of all improper desire; enjoining us, in "whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content," without anxious wishes for any thing which our heavenly Father has seen good to deny.

No part of the divine law, separate from its blessed office of being a schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ, discovers a greater manifestation of divine love, than the tenth commandment, whether it respects our own peace, the welfare of our neighbour, the common good, or the glory of God. If sinful desires be entertained, they must pollute and distress the mind, even though the course of providence, or the operations of restraining grace, should hinder the perpetration of the contemplated sin. The great majority of men,

however, practise upon themselves a gross and fatal delusion, by thinking nothing evil which is confined within the recesses of the heart. If the sovereignty of God were confined by those limits which bound human authority, and could take cognizance of external disobedience only, such a view might be correct. But as "the Lord seeth not as man seeth;" as he "looketh upon the heart," such an opinion merely leads those who entertain it, to sport themselves with their own deceivings. That professor of the gospel of Christ, who would adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things, and avoid the peril of making shipwreck of faith, and of a good conscience, must pray "that all carnal affections may die in him, and that all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow in him." "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart, be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer!" It must not suffice him, that the stream of evil gushes not forth to the light; its fountain must be dried up in the heart. Thence proceed evil thoughts, the leaders of all that terrible army of mischief, sin, and sorrow, which our Lord Jesus Christ has so forcibly described. Here then must be the main conflict of a Christian. Little does that man know of spiritual warfare, of his own deceitful heart, of the divine requirement, or of his causes of danger, who does not feel that safety and hope depend, under the salvation of the cross, upon the courage and constancy with which the battle is fought against the bosom sins that do most easily beset him. It is no easy task to take the child of our cherished, though sinful desire, as Abraham took his son, and to offer it upon the altar of a divine command. That unholy affection will not lie patiently upon the wood, and beneath the knife; nor resign itself to death, as a lamb that is brought to the slaughter, which is dumb. It will resist, remonstrate, plead. If it should see the tempted spirit in earnest for its extermination, it will only desire, as it were, a respite from present execution; and such a delay as Jephthah's daughter required of her father; "Let me

alone awhile, and then do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth." Beware, however, that ye listen not to the seduction. If any unhallowed desire have arisen within you, go in prayer to God, through the mediation of Jesus, for the almighty help of his Spirit, to enable you to subdue it: and, in the sufficiency of that grace, rest not day nor night, until it be brought into subjection to the will of your God and Saviour. Carnal nature may plead for its indulgence, as Lot for Zoar, "Is it not a little one?" But that wisdom which the Holy Ghost teacheth, will show you, that as the least neglected spark may enkindle a conflagration, to lay waste a city, so may an unobserved lust burst at length into a flame, which may consume the present and eternal peace of the offender. All our desires, if we wish them not to lead us into sin, must be kept in entire obedience to the revealed will and law of God. If they usurp a dominion over us, they instantly become our remorseless tyrants. While Hagar was a servant, no act of undutifulness is charged upon her; but when she is given into Abraham's bosom, she taunts the patriarch's wife, disturbs his house, and gains an influence over him, so strong, that, until enjoined by the Most High himself, he cannot consent to part with her. One security alone remains; "Keep thy heart with all diligence." Imitate Nehemiah, therefore, when he and the captains of Judah were endeavouring to rebuild Jerusalem, while their enemies conspired to hinder them. "We made our prayer unto God, and set a watch against them day and night." A Christian should pass through the temptations around him, as Israel wished to pass through the highway of Edom, turning not aside, but hastening towards the promised land, with his eye and heart so fully occupied by the glory and joy set before him, as to have no desire for perishing vanities. Such a heavenly mindedness is the best remedy for the love of sinful things. He only who has thus learned to "walk by faith," and to "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus"

his Saviour, will be able to escape the pollutions that are in the world through lust. He only who can hope, that by the grace of adoption, his body has become the temple of the Holy Ghost, a habitation of God through the Spirit, will be anxious to preserve himself from all defilement. Only such a man is happy in his life, and in his hope: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Thirdly, *It rarely happens that evil rests with the indulgence of desire.* Satan is too malignant an enemy to leave the transgressor, until evil be consummated. "Lust, when it is conceived, bringeth forth sin." Such was the experience of Achan. Unholy desire led him into flagrant transgression. "I saw these things, I coveted them, and took them." When the great enemy of man has led captive the soul in the bonds of any evil concupiscence, his greatest work is done. Some promise of secrecy, some assurance of delight, some favourable opportunity, some removal of restraints, or some sudden and violent temptation, will be cast before the endangered bond-servant; and he will be contented, nay, think himself in the way of peace and happiness, to do the bidding of his dreadful master, and earn the wages of sin, eternal death. As Christ formed in a believer's heart is the principle of life, and the hope of glory, so evil desires formed in the mind of an ungodly man, will, in all probability, be nurtured into actual wickedness, and become practical presumptuous sin. Behold their consequences in Achan's trespass, and in the circumstances which led to its commission; and be warned against them. Avoid the persons, the places, the amusements, the books, which would lead you into temptation. If seduction should assail you, endeavour to realize the presence of the Lord, the terrors, and the mercies of his love. So that when the tempter aims his fiercest and most fiery dart, you may each say, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

The history of iniquity, like the roll in Ezekiel's vision, is "written within, and without, with lamentation, and mourning, and wo." "Lust," as we have seen,

"when it is conceived, bringeth forth sin:" but the sad process stops not here. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Following, therefore, the course of this dark though instructive history, we reach

*Secondly, THE CONSEQUENCES OF ACHAN'S GUILT.*

When Ahab met Elijah, he cried, in the consciousness of his own offences, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" "I have not troubled Israel," answered the indignant prophet, "but thou and thy father's house; in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord." Similar to this reproof was the mournful address of Joshua to Achan, when sentence was about to pass upon him. "Why hast thou troubled us? The Lord shall trouble thee this day." He was not merely his own enemy, but the enemy of the tribes among whom he dwelt. His offence had a double aspect of wrath,—upon others, and upon himself.

First, *It brought shame, defeat, and death into the camp of Israel.* His iniquity was visited upon them. "Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them; for they have taken of the accursed thing; therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, because they were accursed." The divine presence and power manifested among them, and displayed in their behalf, could alone cover their heads, and give them victory in the day of battle. That presence was withdrawn, that omnipotence ceased to protect and prosper them, while the sin of Achan remained undiscovered and unpunished. "I will not be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed thing from among you." The men of Israel and Joshua evidently considered their disgrace and defeat before Ai, as a mark of the divine displeasure. "The Lord's arm was not shortened, that it could not save, nor his ear heavy, that it could not hear; but their iniquities had separated between them and their God, and their sins had hid his face from them that he would not hear." Is it asked, amidst the fluctuation of public opinion, and the agitations of political conflict,

“Who is the bitterest enemy of his country?” The answer is at hand; he who is the most daring violator of the law of his God. That man does his country more mischief than all the armed array of human foes. His guilt sharpens their swords, and nerves their arms, and invigorates their devices. On the other hand, it turns the councils of that land where his sin is committed, encouraged, or tolerated, like the counsels of Ahithophel, into foolishness. It brings dissension into the cabinet, and weakness, or cowardice, into the field. It makes the hearts of the people melt and become like water before their enemies. As Christians, as lovers of our brethren, whose safety or whose life our guilt may endanger; as patriots, who regard our country, and would make her the real glory of all lands, we are loudly required to repress the love, and abstain from the commission of all evil. Otherwise, however secretly it be wrought, it will have an awful manifestation in the shame, reproach, disgrace, and danger, which it may produce to the land and the institutions which we are bound to honour and defend.

Secondly, *The guilt of Achan brought sorrow upon Joshua and the princes of Israel.* “Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord, until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust on their heads.” In this distress he was led to expostulate with God, in earnest sincerity, yet with a great alloy of unadvised eagerness, doubt, and even despondency. Among the collateral and indirect evils of sin, must be reckoned the shame and sorrow which it produces in the minds of those who are jealous for the glory of God, and anxious for the best interests of their brethren. Rivers of water ran down the eyes of the man after God’s own heart, because Israel kept not the law of the Lord. Paul mourned over the iniquities of the false teachers at Philippi: “Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.” Who that knows the dreadful consequences of

offending God, the terrors of almighty justice, executed by almighty power; who that views with the eye of faith the woes inflicted by the worm that dieth not, and the fire that never shall be quenched, can see a mistaken fellow creature ruining his soul, and sinning away every hope of its eternal salvation, without being moved to sorrow, and agitated by a regret, too frequently as vain as it is poignant? And shall not this very grief of others, like-minded with the compassionate Saviour, be reckoned by a just and holy God as aggravations of the transgressors’ guilt? My brethren, if Christian friends have expostulated with any of you upon the evil of your way; if tears have flowed from the eye, and anguish has filled the heart of a parent, a brother, a sister, or a friend, in consequence of the dishonour which you have done to the mercy of God, the blood of Christ, the pleading of the Holy Ghost; if they have remonstrated with you, besought you to have pity upon yourselves, laid your awful case before God in prayer, and still found you obdurate; will not this, suppose ye, be required of you in the day of final retribution? Will it not add to the guilt of the devoted city in judgment, that Jesus wept over it, and would have saved it? And shall you be guiltless of this additional item in the awful reckoning for sin? Alas, no! Bear the conviction deeply in your minds: and while there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth; while the eternal Father waits their recovery to bid heaven and earth rejoice over it, and to cry, “This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found;” while the Lamb of God desires to see in you of the travail of his soul, and to be satisfied; and while the hearts of Christian friends yearn over you, to bring you to salvation, listen to the united voice, obey the heavenly impulse, and be saved.

Thirdly, *Against considerations of this kind, however, Achan might have been steeled and fortified:* but there were consequences to himself which would repay his transgression, and make its folly and bitterness come home to his mind with terrible regret. For a time the garment,

and the shekels, and the wedge lay in his tent: and though he could not wear the one, nor spend the others, he might pride himself upon possessing them, in the miserable delusion of a covetous spirit. But the Israelites were summoned before the Lord, and the hour of recompense was at hand. At first he might stand enwrapped in security, and little fearful, that among the mighty multitude assembled round him, he alone should be detected: but his unholy confidence could not abide. The tribe of Judah, to which he belonged, is taken; and the probabilities of discovery are vastly increased. Some rising fear begins to struggle with his unholy confidence: and now his heart throbs with a quicker and louder alarm; for the family of the Zarahites, of which he was a member, is selected from the rest, as containing the guilty man. That family comes near by its household; and lo! the family of Zabdi is taken. Whither now shall Achan flee, and where is the hope of secrecy with which he lulled his soul to sleep, in its guilt and crime? The family of Zabdi advances, the last lots are given forth; and behold, Achan, the son of Carmi, is found, and stands among the countless thousands of Israel, pointed out by the unerring finger of God, as the man who had taken the accursed thing, and made himself a curse by this presumptuous act of sacrilege. The talents and the raiment were beautiful in the eyes of Gehazi, when he bestowed them in the house; but how dim and worthless would they appear, when the prophet's voice thundered in his ear, and he went from the presence of the man of God, "a leper as white as snow!" Ananias and Sapphira came boldly before the apostles, doubtless taking credit to themselves for the craft with which they had cheaply earned a good report of being merciful to the poor: but when they fell dead at the apostle's feet, the value of their money must have perished with them. Of all the delusions which the god of this world can spread before the heart, the practical infidelity which whispers the hope of impunity for sin is the most common and the most dreadful. Be sure, however, that your sin will find you out; pro-

bably before men; assuredly in that day when the thousands of Israel who surrounded Achan will be as a drop of water to the ocean, compared with the unimaginable multitude of the assembled world. Every secret sin will then shine as clearly before the eye of God, as the sun appears in the unclouded heaven. "There is no darkness, neither shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves." Wrath will descend upon them. As Achan, his family, and all that he had, were stoned, and burned in the fire, so must obdurate transgressors perish in the fierceness of that flame, which the breath of an offended God will enkindle in judgment. Where then was Achan's joy in the accursed thing? Where also shall be the pleasure which the wicked, and those who forget God, took in the toys and trifles for which they have been contented to barter their eternal peace? "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" O what will be the deep, the unavailing anguish of the convicted offender, when the last lot falls upon him, and when, in answer to his cry, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" the Judge shall exclaim, "I have found thee!" My brethren, let the fate of Achan warn you to flee temptation, as Absalom's brethren fled from the feast, when they saw their brother Amnon murdered at the table for his offence. If you have already ventured upon the dark and downward way of wilful transgression, let the example of this lost Israelite meet you in the sad career; even as they who pursued Abner stood still when they saw the bloody body of Asahel in the path before them.

First, *The experience of the Israelites on this occasion should teach us, never to undervalue the strength of a single temptation.* The spies whom Joshua sent to view Ai thought meanly of its defences, and said, "Let not all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither, for they are but few." In this presuming confidence, and willing to spare themselves the toil of

warfare, they attacked this despised city, and were repulsed with loss. Your temptations may appear small, your means of resistance and victory within yourselves amply sufficient; but the least temptation is irresistible by your unassisted strength. The feeblest arrow in the quiver of Satan, if you are provided with no other armour than your own sufficiency, is deadly enough to destroy you eternally. Peter was never more in danger, than when he imagined it impossible that he should deny his Master; nor Samson, with all his strength, than when he confidently slept in the lap of Delilah. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Remember that you wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with the principalities and powers of sin. "Take unto you, therefore, the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all to stand." Self-sufficiency is the bane of man. Be persuaded of your own inability. Be persuaded of Satan's power. Look to the all-sufficient Spirit of God for help; and imitate him who said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Secondly, *The conduct of Achan should impress upon us all the necessity of a prompt and ample confession of our offences against the law of God.* No sooner was he urged on this point by Joshua, than he made a most ingenuous disclosure of his guilt. "I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done." "Whoso covereth his sins shall not prosper, but he that confesseth and forsaketh it shall have mercy. If any say, I have sinned and perverted that which is right, and it profited me not, God will deliver his soul from going down to the pit, and his life shall see the light." Thus cast yourselves upon the mercy of the Father, at the cross of his Son. Thus give glory to God that he hath convinced you of sin; that he has not yet recompensed your rebellion in the woes of hopeless and eternal judgment; that he has provided an atoning Saviour, whose blood cleanseth from all sin; a sanctifying Spirit, who can make you new creatures in Christ Jesus. Be less anx-

ious to escape from human judgment, than to be acquitted through Christ, in the judgment of eternity. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Thirdly, *The example of Joshua warns us, that prayer for the mercy of God must be joined with an earnest zeal for his holiness.* The leader of Israel lay before the ark, engaged in fervent supplication: but the divine command reached him, "Get thee up; why liest thou upon thy face? Israel hath sinned. Up, sanctify the people: ye cannot stand before your enemies until ye take away the accursed thing from among you." Individual or national fasts and supplications are the mockeries of humiliation and prayer, unless we aim to wash our hearts from wickedness. When we search the chambers of iniquity within us, by the word and Spirit of God, and desire the expulsion of every idol, we may hope for success. If we endeavour not to mortify all the iniquity, against which we implore divine help, we are assisting Satan to close our eyes, and tempting God to harden our hearts. "Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." Live in the spirit of prayer; and improve the graces which you entreat the God of mercy, through his Son, to bestow upon you. Depend upon God; but see that ye receive not his grace in vain. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure." Cast out the accursed thing. So shall your prayer be heard, your warfare assisted, your victory secured, your triumph made eternally glorious."

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#### THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE.

"THE resurrection and the life;" these are thy magnificent titles, captain of our salvation! And therefore we commit to thee body and soul; for thou hast redeemed both, and thou wilt advance both to the noblest and most splendid of por-

tions. Who quails and shrinks, scared by the despotism of death! Who among you fears the dashing of those cold black waters which roll between us and the promised land? Men and brethren, grasp your own privileges. Men and brethren, Christ Jesus has "abolished death;" will ye, by your fearfulness, throw strength into the skeleton, and give back empire to the dethroned and the destroyed? Yes, "the resurrection and the life" "abolished death." Ye must indeed die, and so far death remains undestroyed. But if the terrible be destroyed when it can no longer terrify, and if the injurious be destroyed when it can no longer injure; if the enemy be abolished when it does the work of a friend, and if the tyrant be abolished when performing the offices of servant; if the repulsive be destroyed when we can welcome it, and if the odious be destroyed when we can embrace it; if the quicksand be abolished when we can walk it and sink not, if the fire be abolished when we can walk through it and be scorched not, if the poison be abolished when we can drink it and hurt not; then is death destroyed, then is death abolished, to all who believe on the "resurrection and the life;" and the noble prophecy is fulfilled, (bear witness, ye groups of the ransomed, bending down from your high citadel of triumph!) "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction."

"I heard a voice from heaven"—O for the angel's tongue, that words so beautiful might have all their melodiousness—"saying unto me, Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." It is yet but a little while, and we shall be delivered from the burden and the conflict, and with all those who have preceded us in the righteous struggle, enjoy the deep raptures of a Mediator's presence. Then, reunited to the friends with whom we

took sweet counsel upon earth, we shall recount our toil only to heighten our ecstasy, and call to mind the tug and the din of the war, only that, with a more bounding throb, and a richer song, we may feel and celebrate the wonders of redemption. And when the morning of the first resurrection breaks upon this long-disordered and groaning creation, then shall our text be understood in all its majesty, and in all its marvel: and then shall the words, whose syllables mingle so often with the funeral knell, that we are disposed to carve them on the cypress tree rather than on the palm, "I am the resurrection and the life," from the chorus of that noble anthem, which those for whom Christ "died, and rose, and revived," shall chant as they march from judgment to glory.—*Rev. H. Mc-ville, A.M.*

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HOPE.

WHAT would the life of man be without hope? Remove it, and you take away at once the relish of prosperity, and the support and solace of adversity. Let the tide of prosperity run ever so high, and flow with unebbing fulness ever so long, if the hope of its continuance be destroyed, it is instantly deprived of all its power to satisfy. Let the prosperous man be certainly assured, that his prosperity is to last but one day longer; that, at the close of so short a time, its springs are to be dried up, and he is to be left in all the dreariness of universal desolation: would that day, think you, be enjoyed by him? No; the extinction of hope would be the extinction of joy. And O what would adversity be without hope! This is the last lingering light of the human bosom, that continues to shine when every other has been extinguished. Quench it, and the gloom of affliction becomes the very blackness of darkness—cheerless and impenetrable.—*Wardlaw.*

## SERMON XVIII.

THE JOY OF HEAVEN OVER A REPENTANT SINNER.

BY THE LATE REV. JOHN GEDDES,

MINISTER OF ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, GLASGOW.

*"Likewise, I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."*—Luke xv. 10.

AN event may be deemed remarkable, either on its own account, or on account of the circumstances which invariably accompany it. In both these respects, the event mentioned in the text merits attention. It is, in the first place, remarkable on its own account,—a sinner saved, a soul converted, a child of disobedience becoming an heir of God. To the sinner himself, it is the one thing that is needful, not essential to any title that he may have for heaven, but essential to his meetness for heaven and that change of character, without which it is impossible that he can ever stand before God in judgment, or be admitted into his presence, where there is fulness of joy, and to a place at his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore. And in regard, again, to the circumstances which are invariably combined with it, we find that the interest produced by it is not confined to earth. It gladdens saints, but it also gladdens angels. It is glad tidings on earth, but it is good news also in heaven. Among angels even, who know how precious the soul is, and who form far higher estimates regarding both the glory of God, and the happiness of man, than we do, we read, that there is joy over one sinner that repenteth. Nor are we fancying now an interest in our welfare which is never felt. Our faith here is not passive nor dependent on the saying of man. It is upon the authority of

Jesus Christ, who, while upon earth, knew what was transacted and felt in heaven, who knows the feelings and the joys of angels, for he is their Lord, that we receive the declaration, "I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." In discoursing from these words, it is intended, in humble dependence on the divine aid and blessing, to consider, in the *first* place, THE EVENT ITSELF; and to consider, in the *second* place, THE JOY WHICH THIS EVENT PRODUCES.

*In the first place, attend to the event itself, thus expressed, "a sinner that repenteth."* In the first part of this statement we are all included, being all sinners. From the second part we may be excluded, for we may not be all penitents. It may, with regard to many present, be the melancholy fact, that up to this hour they are still in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity, still children of disobedience, and heirs of wrath, still far from God, still at enmity with him, and still rolling sin as a sweet morsel in their mouths. There are notorious profligate presumptuous sinners, whose necks are as iron, and whose brows are as brass—who glory in their shame—who work all manner of iniquity with greediness—who declare too plainly for us to be mistaken, that they are the slaves of Satan—who gratify their own inclinations, and evil lusts, and sinful propensi-

ties—who set their mouths continually against God—who cast off fear and restrain prayer—who say, With our tongues will we prevail, with our lips will we prevail, who is Lord over us? There are secret, disguised, concealed sinners, who endeavour to maintain a fair show before men, who study to keep an outward decency, but whose hearts are inwardly corrupt, awfully depraved and polluted, and in regard to whom, there will be some fearful disclosures on the day of judgment, when the books will be opened, and when the Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart. There are Pharisaical sinners who vainly fancy that they have no need for repentance, who attend to small matters, but neglect the weightier, who tithe as it were mint, and anise, and cummin, but who neglect judgment and mercy, and do not walk humbly with God; who are going about to establish a righteousness of their own, justifying themselves in their own eyes; who are a generation that are even pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness; and in regard to whom it will be proved, that in going about to establish a righteousness of their own, they have neglected the righteousness of God, which is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and which, while it attends to small matters, and does not leave them undone, attends also to the weighty matters, having received the doctrine that is according to godliness, and being clothed with humility, are rooted in faith, and established in love. There are also stupid, unconcerned sinners, who look no farther than the body and time, who put no other questions than, What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?—who know not God in whom they live, and move, and have their being, so as to pray before him, who do not live under the power of the world to come, and who know less of God than the ox knows of its owner, or the ass of his master's crib. There are light-minded, careless sinners, whom sorrow never clouds, to whom pleasure in every form is welcome, and into whose hearts no se-

rious thought, even on the Sabbath, ever enters to restrain them, or awaken them, or bring them to serious concern, and who are saying, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die," and are presumptuously saying, "To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." And there are worldly-minded sinners who have no time, no inclination, and no leisure, for religion. They are careful about many things; they are concerned about this world; they are wholly occupied and engrossed by it; their hearts are overcharged with the cares of this life, though it be not with drunkenness and with gluttony; and many things are continually rising up to choke the word, and to render it unfruitful; and their hearts are inclined unto covetousness, and not unto God's testimonies; and money is to them the root of all evil; and they are pierced through with many sorrows, and are making shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience. There are also procrastinating sinners, who admit the necessity, but delay the duty of repentance, who fancy that to-morrow will be a more convenient season than to-day, who stifle present conviction, who put away from them present serious impressions, who pave life with good intentions, and at last die as they live—still far from God. Nay, there are even, in some measure, convinced and awakened sinners, whose convictions have not terminated in conversion. Like Cain, they complain, and they wander, and they reckon somehow that God is hard, and that they are suffering more than they can bear. Like Esau, they weep, but it is for an earthly portion, and because they succeeded not according to what they reckon due to their talents, their skill, or their industry. They think themselves wise, or they think themselves warranted in not setting their desires and their affections on things above, but in desiring earnestly those other gifts that perish with the using; or, like Pharaoh, though they be softened beneath the immediate pressure and pain of the rod, yet the moment that judgment is withdrawn, they return again to their folly, and to their wickedness, and say, Who is the Lord that we should

obey him: we will not listen to his voice. Or, like Ahab, they may clothe themselves in sackcloth, and sit in ashes, and walk steadily for a season, but still their hearts are not right with God. They are turned from many sins outwardly, and yet they retain the love of sin inwardly; and when an opportunity presents itself, and when former temptations return, they harden themselves against God, and act wickedly; or, like Herod, they approve of much, and they may even practise much, but they retain their darling and their besetting sins. At one breach the enemy continually enters, and the citadel of the heart is taken; at one leak the water continually enters, and the soul is sunk in ruin. And they are like Herod at last with the daughter of Herodias, under the dominion still of iniquity, led on to commit evil, which they once abhorred; and like Hazael, though they may have been astonished at their former state, and reckon themselves dogs to do such wicked things, yet these and such things they do, and are swallowed down at last into utter perdition. There was a Judas who repented, but, in despair, he thrust himself into God's presence. There was a Dives, of whom we read as having repented, but it was too late, and he lifted up his eyes in hell, and was in torment. None of all these can be the repentance spoken of in the text. The repentance that we have now been speaking of is mere local repentance, mere formal or superstitious repentance—the repentance of the world, which worketh death—not the repentance of the gospel, which is through faith in Jesus, and through looking to the cross unto eternal life. These convictions mentioned are consistent with the heart in which conversion has never taken place; but the repentance now supposed is repentance unto life, a change of heart as well as a change of state, a reigning in the heart over sin, and a breaking off of the life from it, a relative change as to God—we are justified—and a real change as to his law—we are made to delight in it. We have a true sense of sin—we have apprehensions of the mercy of God in Christ—we have grief on account of sin,

and hatred to it, and we turn from it unto God with full purpose of heart, and endeavours after new obedience. The repentance supposed is not a seeming but a real repentance, and is in complete harmony with the law and the gospel. The law is honoured by the terror which it produces: the gospel is honoured by the peace which it maintains. The law is magnified by the alarm that has been excited, and the gospel is magnified by the communication of that purifying hope which maketh not ashamed. The sinner is humbled, the Saviour is exalted, God is obeyed, and the penitent himself praises God, and says, He hath delivered mine eyes from tears, my feet from falling, and my soul from hell.

These remarks explain, in the first place, *the kind of event that is here mentioned*, and I have been the more particular in explaining the nature of repentance unto life, inasmuch as we are ready to flatter ourselves in our own eyes, to think that we are penitents when we are not, to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, to be satisfied with a partial and a seeming, instead of a full and real repentance, and to suppose, simply because we are better outwardly than we once were, that we are therefore all that we ought to be, and that we may say unto ourselves, Peace, when there is no real and lasting foundation for our peace. It is pleasing to think of the privileges of the penitent, and of the interest taken in him—that even angels rejoice over him. But let none conclude that they are penitent, unless they have received that grace which has really created the clean heart, which has really renewed the right spirit, and which is really serving God in newness of life; for if any man be in Christ, or a true penitent, he is renewed, old things have passed away, and all things have become new. There is a change of heart that will delight in heaven, along with a title that will secure our admission into heaven; and the same righteousness that is wrought out for us by the Redeemer is in connexion with the righteousness that is also wrought in us, and by us, and for us, by the Spirit, the Sanctifier, and the Comforter, making us meet

for the inheritance of the saints in light. Let us seek, therefore, for the real thorough change that repentance necessarily imparts, and let us not go away in our thoughts or in our imagination, to think of the happiness of the saints, without also meditating on what is equally essential to be really a saint—that we may be made holy, in all manner of life and conversation, and that we bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

Let us proceed now, then, to meditate *on the joyfulness of the event mentioned in the text.* “There is joy,” says our Lord, “in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” Think, then, in the first place, of the high character, of the high rank of the order of beings now spoken of as rejoicing—Angels, who occupy a higher place in the scale of creation than men, who are pure spirits not having bodies as we have—who are distinguished, it would appear, into different orders themselves, as marked by their different names in the Bible, Seraphim or Cherubim, thrones or dominions, principalities or powers, lights or burning lights—who are spoken of as excelling in wisdom and in strength, who hearken unto God’s voice, and do what he commands—who are represented as the morning stars, who sang together for joy when the foundations of the earth were laid, when the heavens were stretched out by his power, when the firmament was established in his wisdom, and when the earth was founded in his discretion. These angels look not only into the scheme of creation, but also into the scheme of redemption, and they are permitted not only to know its general character, but also the history of its individual success among the children of men, to whom it is addressed and for whom it is provided. They can describe it generally, as in their song of praise, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men;” but they have also a particular information regarding its effectual application, for when a sinner repents there is a change that is communicated to them, and there is a joy among them respecting him. Now, with regard to the manner in which

they receive the information, we can enter into no explanation. Upon this, as upon many other points, we must be satisfied with ascertaining the ultimate fact, though we cannot understand nor reason respecting the immediate means. This one thing simply, we are informed, that they do know, and that when they know it they rejoice. And it is to us, though of them we know so little, a pleasing testimony of benevolent interest, of affectionate regard, and of exalted and endearing sympathy. It introduces us already to the hopes above. It makes us, even now, in some measure acquainted with the angels that are before the throne. They can enter into our feelings, and we may in some measure enter into theirs. And when the veil of sense shall be withdrawn, it may, for aught we know, be one of the first discoveries in the celestial state to be introduced to, and to be made acquainted with, that angel, or with those angels, who have more especially received commission respecting ourselves, who have encamped about us, who have been ministering spirits to us as the heirs of immortality, who have had continual charge over us, who, when we were but little ones, but babes in Christ, saw the Father’s face in heaven, and have been watching over us continually, really though unseen, and are our guardians till we sit down with them in our Father’s house, and are admitted into the presence of God, their Lord and ours; and we know surely enough of the character of angels, and of the scheme of redemption, to find reason upon reason why at such an event they should rejoice. God displayed some of his glory in the wonders of creation, but he displayed the same glory, and glories of another character, and all combined, in higher measure, in the scheme of redemption. And if it was their exercise to behold nature in all its primeval purity, and to celebrate God’s praise as its Creator, much more may we see how they will rejoice in God when they behold the unfolding and application of that scheme according to which mercy and justice, righteousness and peace, have been united, according to which grace is reigning through right-

eousness, and God just even in justifying the ungodly who believe in Christ. These angels have no pleasure in our fall, and the way of our restoration must awaken every benevolent sympathy within them; so that their rejoicing is both for the glory of God and the happiness of men, for communion restored between God and them, and between themselves and men, and for the prospect now set before them of having the children of disobedience and the heirs of wrath sanctified and glorified, and made companions and associates with themselves in the heavenly state, so that they may again call them brethren. Thus it is that beings of high rank, in the order of intelligent creation, rejoice over sinners' repentance.

In the second place, we may consider *the intensity, the universality of the feeling that is produced*. It might be true to say of the angels in heaven, that they rejoice, though the joy was but slight or transient, although it pervaded only a part of the heavenly host. The idea, however, conveyed to us here is the idea, not of a slight or of a transient, but of a deep and of a permanent impression, and it is the idea, moreover, not of joy only among a few, but of joy among all, of but one feeling and one expression of feeling, through all the innumerable company of angels. Heaven in its everyday or ordinary course, if I may be allowed so to speak, is the place of joy, and, therefore, when any event is spoken of here as producing joy, the very mention of it supposes joy to an extraordinary extent—something beyond the ordinary measure of joy, something fit for being marked as a change, and a change from happiness to still greater happiness among the abodes of the blessed. Men smile or weep for trifles, they are deeply affected with matters of no great moment, and there is often a universal sensation either of joy or of grief, when there is no great reason either for the one or for the other, but mistaken these angels cannot be in the theme which they choose for transport. Their own clear understandings, their own pure wills, and their own elevated affections, raise them far above other unseasonable and unstable

joys. They are, moreover, continually in the presence of God, who directs all their feelings, and who guides them still by the intimations of his own will, and by the revelations of his own glory. And, therefore, whether we consider what they in themselves would do, or what God in his providence would allow them to do—either in the one case or in the other, we may well argue an intensity of feeling when angels, always happy, are said to rejoice, when not a few but all are spoken of as joining in the triumph, and when that triumph is, moreover, mentioned as taking place in the presence of God—a season of hosanna, a day of jubilee, a loud hallelujah unto God, animating all the saints, pervading the innumerable company of angels, gladdening Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, approved of by God the judge of all, and all centring in this—the Redeemer seeing of the travail of his soul and satisfied. Thus the angels administered to Jesus when he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, when he was in an agony, and the sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground; and were it no other scene in heaven than Jesus seeing of the fruit of his travail and satisfied, we can easily suppose how all is true that is here expressed, how much more is true that cannot be expressed, and that cannot be conceived, but is known in heaven. Joy there is there over one sinner that repenteth.

Again we may think, in the third place, *of the season at which such joy is stated as commencing*, not when the sinner enters heaven, not when his repentance issues in eternal life—the joy will then follow of course—but when his title to heaven has been received, when his meetness for it is but beginning, and when he is still to make progress in the way to Zion with his face thitherward—when he is to wage war with Satan, and with the world, and with the flesh, and when there is a long course lying before him, a race which he has to run, a warfare to which he has to expose himself, and a fight which he has to endure, and painful exercise through which he has to pass, before he is made perfect through suffering. It is a pleas-

ing proof of the promptitude with which the intelligence is conveyed to heaven, that it is so soon known. It is a pleasing proof also of the character of the joy produced, that even though it be but beginning as to its ultimate issue, yet there is an immediate feeling of joy respecting it. But especially this joy is presented to us in an interesting light, when we behold these blessed spirits looking down with interest upon what is just taking place, when the penitent is shedding tears, when he is making his confessions, when he is feeling most his unworthiness, when he can do nothing more than cry out "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner!" "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" "Speak, Lord, for I thy servant hear." "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." "O Lord! if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." To them it is a pleasing thought that another ingrafting is taking place to the living tree, that another stone is preparing for the heavenly building, that another member is adding to the body that constitutes the fullness of Him who filleth all in all, and that another heir is born in the redeemed family. For, dead though he be to the world, yet in Christ he can anticipate the time when his infant powers shall reach their manhood, when receiving the sincere milk of the word he shall grow thereby, when he shall be fit for strong meat, when he shall be strong through the word of God abiding in him, when in old age he shall bring forth fruit, when he shall be beautiful as the lily, and strong as the cedars of Lebanon, and when, no longer a hoping penitent, he shall be a sanctified and glorified saint, and be for ever associated with saints and angels, hearkening unto God's voice, and doing whatsoever he commands. To us there seems a long, a dark, and doubtful interval between, long days, and nights, and years, in the world of tribulation—but to angels, who do not unite time as we do, and over whose blessed abodes a thousand years pass away even as a single day, the transition seems but short between the trials of the sinner and the triumphs of the saint. And though many a dark frowning providence is now lower-

ing on the penitent who is sowing in tears, yet they know who is behind the cloud, who smiles for ever over those who are the objects of his care and the subjects of his love. They know how behind the frowning providence he hides a smiling face, and that they will ere long reap in joy. Though they have sympathy with the saint when he bows his head, and can think of his gray hairs going down with sorrow to the grave, they have such experience of the providence of God, as to know before the saints know, that their tears will finally be wiped away, and that the same heart that seemed at one time ready to burst with grief, will at another time also be ready to burst with joy, even as Jacob's did when, not thinking to see Joseph himself, he exclaimed, "Lo! I have seen even Joseph's seed, his sons, and his sons' sons." Such bliss attends those who wait for the salvation of God. Angels so long observing providence, are not cast down, nor are their prospects clouded as ours, when God is pleased to make us go forth and sow in tears under the promise that we shall reap in joy. They see how the Lord Jesus Christ has done—how he has guarded over his own—how he is the companion, and the comforter, and the friend of all his people. They know that we are the objects of his heavenly care—they know that we are under His protection, who feeds his flock like a shepherd, who gathers the lambs with his arm, and carries them in his bosom, who will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. They know that we who are believers are for ever rising up beneath this great Redeemer's hand to be the heirs of many promises, that we are coming out from great tribulation to a great inheritance, that we are tried in the furnace, heated seven times, in order that Christ's own image may be formed in us, and that the trial of our faith is therefore exceeding precious.

I have only to state, in the last place, *that each case of conversion is supposed here to be of sufficient magnitude to produce this joy.* There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over *one* sinner

that repenteth. Numbers are not necessary in order to convey to us the idea of value or importance. There are many subjects in regard to which number, and number chiefly, constitutes the claim to consideration, and here the number does not decrease, but on the contrary, augments the interest, and yet still though there be but one, yet each one is of sufficient value. No doubt there was great joy on the day of Pentecost, and when thousands were converted; no doubt there was great joy afterwards, when five thousand were added to the church; no doubt there was great joy again, when a multitude of the priests and of the people believed; but still each individual as marked in heaven's book, may be considered as a fit occasion for praising God, and as serving to minister to the delights of angels. Or we shall even take it in another light. You may suppose that one soul converted may, in special circumstances, or at particular seasons, or because of the individual character, be of great importance, even as the conversion of Paul included within itself the conversion of thousands—even as Paul was a chosen vessel, and took many from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. And we can almost conceive in heaven a kind of joy like to the day of Pentecost itself, when the news reached heaven that souls were approaching, and approaching from the earth to the Father, and that the church was multiplied, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost. But neither is a case of this kind put down as the only case fitted to excite joy. On the contrary, however few may be the conversions that are taking place, or however obscure, unknown, or unimportant may be the individual converted, though there be included in his conversion no more than his own soul's salvation, though he be removed from the world and leave no other proof behind him than such a proof as the penitent malefactor on the cross may be supposed to have left; though we think simply on what one immortal soul necessarily receives, we think of something that outweighs in value all the happiness merely temporal of all the

myriads that have ever inhabited the world, even down to the present moment. All the joys of all that have dwelt upon the earth, and who are now laid in the dust, have passed away as if they had never been; but the soul of righteous Abel has been always in heaven, and always delighting—ever since our Lord died upon the cross. The single penitent malefactor has received within his own individual existence happiness more real, and happiness more lasting, than the happiness merely temporal of all the millions that have been upon our globe during the continuance of the Christian era. And when days, and nights, and years, shall have passed away with the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, when the pleasures of sin shall all have departed, the joys of the penitent shall still remain, and the triumphs of angels over them shall still be considered as affording them suitable joy, even though connected with the history of but one immortal soul brought out of a state of sin and misery into a state of salvation through the Redeemer. The soul dies not with the body—it dies not though it be unclothed—it passes into another world and still exists. Before it all is eternity and immutability. It fears or it hopes, it grieves or it rejoices, it loves or it hates, it swells with ceaseless transport, or it shrinks with ceaseless horror at the constant opening of eternity. Soon my body shall have the clods of the valley to cover it, and my memory shall perish from the earth; but shall memory itself die—shall the soul that now lives, and moves, and sees, and hears, and speaks within me die? No. When the years which I have lived have passed away like the years before the flood, my soul will still be in the eternal world. And, O! how solemn the question, shall it have gone up to heaven, or shall it have gone down to hell? Shall it be trembling with devils, or shall it be rejoicing with saints and angels? Shall it be weeping and wailing, or shall it be holy, singing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the Lamb? Shall it be filthy still, or shall it be holy still? Damnation—men speak the word. Do

they know the meaning of it? Could you breathe it to your fiercest enemy? O! how could you endure the everlasting burning? Were it uttered as with a voice from heaven, there were for you no remaining hope. Would it not be an awful voice to any one individual here? Wonder not, then, if angels rejoice, if they are as gods, having no pleasure in our death, but willing rather that we would turn from our wickedness and live. And let me now say with regard to any, if any such there be, still far from God, that if it were given to that one even now to repent and to live, rest assured that angels, even as they have rejoiced before, will be at no loss to rejoice again—that they will utter still their notes of triumph if over you the Spirit shall pause, making you to surrender to Jesus, and to exclaim, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? what shall I do to be saved? and suggesting to you the answer, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and inherit eternal life.”

We have considered then, in the first place, *the event of the text*. We have considered, secondly, *the joy produced by it*. Let me press both these upon your attention, and let me warn you against treating with indifference a subject which angels view with interest, not as it were for their own sakes, but for yours. Angels know our danger—they see the awful misery that sin produces—they know the dreadful state of the impenitent in hell, and because they have no pleasure in our death, they desire to see us seeking and loving God. Therefore I pray you to give heed to Jesus. He came into the world to seek and to save the lost. He loved us, and gave himself for us, and he now says, “Come now and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” God has given his providence to warn, and he has given his word to direct and encourage us. God is now, in his providence, speaking

to us by awful judgments in the midst of us, by disease in different forms carrying us away, so that many die as it were in a moment suddenly. Now as the tree falls so it must lie. As death finds us, so will death also fix us. There are no pardons offered, there are no pardons sealed in the grave. The way to heaven is open from earth, but it is not open from hell. The offers of mercy are free, and full, and unrestricted here, and we say, therefore, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” What is a man that is not a penitent? What does our Lord say he is like? He is like a piece of lost silver to its owner, like a lost sheep, like a prodigal son—and we are all in Heaven’s sight as prodigal children, till we become penitent children, till we arise and come to our Father, till we say, Father we have sinned, and are no more worthy to be called thy children. We have departed from the chief end of our being. We are not glorifying God, and not enjoying him, while we remain impenitent; and the lamp of life is only allowed to burn to give us time and space for repentance. To-day, therefore, if we will hear God’s voice, it becomes us not to harden our hearts against him. Wherefore I pray you to search the Scriptures, that you may understand the privilege, that you may know the duty, and that you may desire after the graces of true penitents. And I pray God that your sins may be pardoned, that your souls may be sanctified, that you may be enabled to delight in the Lord God after the inward man, and that losing one kind of pleasure, the pleasure of sin, you may find another and a greater, the love of his Son, and the righteousness and the gladness that will ever arise in the upright in heart. May the Lord bless his word, and to his name be the praise. Amen.

## SERMON XIX.

THE EFFECTS PRODUCED BY DIVINE GRACE.

BY THE LATE REV. S. DREW, A.M.

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*"And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them."*—Isa. xlii. 16.

WE seem, my friends, to be placed on a kind of isthmus—surrounded on all sides with infinite and eternal duration. Time, perhaps, may be compared to an island starting up in the boundless ocean of eternity; destined to live for a few revolving years, then to sink down and disappear, when one unbounded sea of infinite duration will involve and cover all.

But what will become of our immortal spirits? We allow that they must continue to live somewhere. We uniformly admit that we have within us a something that cannot die. We trace our origin up to God; we view eternity as our future home. We came from God; we are surrounded with the immensity of God, and, ere long, we must stand before the tribunal of God, to give an account for the deeds done in the body, and to receive from him the righteous awards of mercy or of justice—that happiness or that misery which God shall see proper to assign to every individual of the human race.

There can be no doubt that we are indebted for the origin of our existence to the infinite God: in short, there is not a blessing, there is not a favour, there is not a perfection that can be found in our species, in nature, time, or eternity, but we must trace up to the eternal God. When God called man into existence, there can be no question that he did it, in reference to himself, to display, amplify, and unfold his glory; and, in reference to man, it seems to be equally clear, that he

did it in order to confer happiness; that man might admire, adore, and love that God to whom he was indebted for his being, and derive felicity from a state of constant dependence upon him who is the fountain and source of all genuine happiness.

That we are "fearfully and wonderfully made," is a truth clearly and explicitly expressed in the language of revelation; and all the investigations of science, and all the experience of nations in successive ages, tend to confirm the fact. We possess bodily powers—we possess mental energies; there are certain faculties belonging to the spirit, there are certain powers and senses belonging to the body; they have little or no kind of affinity with each other, and yet they all enter into the general character of the compound man.

When God created man, he endowed his body with five senses; seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, smelling. These senses are so many inlets of knowledge; and, through the medium of these senses, we hold an intercourse with the external world. Were it possible that existence could be without any of these senses, no knowledge whatever of an external world, nor of any other existence besides his individuality, could possibly be known to man. And were we to be deprived of any of these senses, or rather, I should say, if we had been created with four senses instead of five, all that knowledge which we acquire through that fifth sense, of

which we should then be destitute, would be to us totally unknown.

Why God imparted five senses, neither more nor less, is not for us to determine; we resolve the whole into infinite wisdom, goodness, and omnipotent power. If more had been necessary, without doubt more would have been given; if less had been sufficient, no doubt one or more would have been withholden. I can have no conception, when I contemplate infinity, omnipotent power, inexhaustible resources, eternal and infinite knowledge, that all the powers of Deity were exhausted by the communication of five senses. He that gave to man the power of seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, smelling, might, without all doubt, if he had been so pleased, have given to him a sixth sense, perhaps a seventh, perhaps an eighth. Where shall we put bounds? I know of none! And who can say, among the higher orders of intelligences that surround the throne of God in glory, that their senses are precisely the same as ours; constructed in the same manner, neither more nor less in point of number, and that they have their adaptation precisely the same as ours? Our bodies are of the earth, earthly; our senses are designed to communicate with earthly objects; they have each that earthly adaptation which is suited to our condition; but when the spirit becomes disembodied and enters the regions of immortality, who will presume to say that there will not be new powers and faculties and energies developed in the human spirit, of which, at present, we can form no conception?

Without all doubt, we must admit the possibility of these things. Were you to ask me what would be the nature of a sixth or a seventh sense,—which I have presumed to be within the reach of possibility,—I would candidly reply to you, I cannot tell; I have no conception of it; I have no name for it; I have no idea of it. Suppose that God had created the whole of the human race without the organ of hearing, I would ask, Do you think that any of the human family could have had any idea of sound? No! The beating of tempests, the roaring of seas, the rattling of thunder, “the war of elements, the

wreck of matter, and the crash of worlds” would have been unheard; no modulations of sound, no tones of music, no human voice divine would ever have reached our organs; all creation would have been wrapped up in eternal silence! Do you think, then, that any individual could have formed any conception of that sense of which all were destitute? It would be folly to suppose it!

Suppose that all mankind had been formed without the sense of vision; that no individual had been blessed with the power of discernment; creation would have been wrapped up in total night, darkness would have enveloped the world; no brilliancy of colour, no variation in tint and shading, no visibility of objects would ever have been presented to the mind; all would have been enveloped in gloomy darkness. Do you suppose, under such circumstances, that any individual could have formed an idea of sight, of its nature, of its character, of its properties, of its operations, of its effects? No more than a deaf man could form an idea of sound; no more than we, with our five senses, could form an idea of what would be the object of a sixth or seventh sense. We should have no way or means of ascertaining it.

Let us now carry forward the idea a little stage beyond what I have supposed. If, when all the millions of the human race were wrapped in darkness, God, by some marvellous power, should come down with his energy from heaven, or rather send down his energetic Spirit from thence, and give to one solitary individual the power of vision, of sight, of discernment,—he would enter a new world, and, surrounded with new wonders, he would be lost in astonishment. He would talk a language which, to all others, would be totally unknown, and they, perhaps, would be ready to say, A poor visionary,—a madman,—an enthusiast! led away by wild reveries, he talks of a sense which he cannot explain, and a something which no individual but himself possesses; the man deserves bedlam rather than serious attention! Tell us what is the nature of that sight which you have; explain it to us.

Colours cannot be explained to a blind man; an attempt has been made. Mr. Locke records an instance where an effort was made to communicate, to an intelligent man who had been blind from his birth, some idea of colour; and scarlet was chosen for description, because it was conceived to have a greater distinctness, and to be more glaring than any other; but, after a great deal of effort and trial to communicate to him some knowledge of a scarlet colour, he told them he thought he understood it. Being requested to explain it, his apprehension was, that it bore a strong resemblance to the sound of a trumpet. And such would be our notion of light and colour, if we were destitute of the organs of vision, "though a man were to declare it unto us." People would, perhaps, be ready to say, Have any of the doctors believed him? Have any of the rulers embraced this wild notion? Have any of the Pharisees believed this report you give? Do you think that you are the sole favourite of heaven, that you should be favoured with the discernment of a new world, while all around are wrapped in what you call darkness? It is absurd to suppose it; and if another, and another, and another were to be possessed of sight, bestowed just in the manner I have supposed, they would be only ready to say that

"The mad enthusiast never is at rest,  
Till half the world is like himself possess'd."  
And they would count such as the filth and offscouring of mankind.

Now, what I have supposed, in respect of the bodily organs, we find awfully verified, in a spiritual sense, in reference to the whole of mankind. We are blind, we are deaf; by nature we can have no kind of spiritual comprehension of the objects of these different senses, till by Divine power they are restored to us.

There can be no doubt that the passage before us primarily refers to the spiritual condition of man; and there are three points in it, to which I will beg to call your attention. The *first* is, THE SUBJECTS OF DIVINE GRACE; the *second* is, THE OPERATIONS OF DIVINE GRACE; and the *third* is, THE EFFECTS OF DIVINE GRACE IN ITS OPERATIONS. "I will

bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them."

*First*, WE HAVE HERE THE SUBJECTS OF DIVINE GRACE. There is scarcely, in the sacred writings, an epithet that is more generally applied to man, than that of darkness or blindness—spiritual darkness, spiritual blindness; and all the great branches of the gospel dispensation, more or less, carry our views to the change which is effected; taking away the scales of ignorance, restoring eyesight to the blind, giving light to them that walk in darkness, and that are sitting in the region or shadow of death. It is to give light to them that the gospel was sent—to give light to them that the Spirit of God came into the world—to give light to them that the gospel is preached, and that God has sent forth his Holy Spirit to inform the judgment and enlighten the understanding, in order to renovate the heart and make men wise unto salvation.

Our first parents were not born blind; but they departed from the living God, and sunk so far down below their original state of purity, that they lost sight of heaven, and went into a region of darkness. There they groped, and there they grovelled, and there they brought forth, and there they increased their family; and from them have sprung the millions of the human race—all in that state of obscurity and darkness, "far gone from original righteousness!" Thus sin has laid waste "not here and there a kingdom, but a world—despatching, at one wide-extended blow, entire mankind;" so that all—all, from first to last, from the earliest periods of history to the present hour, in all the latitudes, longitudes, climates, and zones on the face of the earth, wherever you find a branch of the human family uninstructed by Divine grace, there they are, by nature, in a state of mental darkness. A deep cloud of darkness rests upon them—"they have eyes, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; they have hearts, but they understand not." There is a call, that

those who sleep should awake: "Awake, thou that sleepest!" and arise from thy vile state, and God will give thee health, and life, and power! To rouse men from their slumber is the great and primary object of the gospel, that they may be brought into light and life and salvation.

If you ask for any proof of this, arising from fact, fact will furnish very strong and very powerful evidence. We know that we are under the inspection of God. We allow it; yet we act as though God did not see us. We know that God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, yet we make no preparation for the awful moment! He warns, and cautions, and admonishes us against sin, and yet we live in the practice of it! He invites and encourages us to the observance of his law, the acceptance of his mercy, to experimental and practical godliness, and yet we put these things from us, not merely "as though to die were no concern of ours," but we seem to act by nature precisely as though vice and virtue had changed their characters; as if future rewards were offered to profligacy and iniquity; and that the righteous would be banished from the presence of the Lord! Do you think men would act thus if they were not blind? Jews and Gentiles are in a state of darkness—all are in a state of darkness—of moral darkness; and, in that state of moral darkness and obscurity, they must have remained throughout time, until ushered into the light of the eternal world, did not God come forth and call us, in infinite compassion, to forsake our sins: and hence,

*Secondly, DIVINE GRACE, MAKING THESE DISCOVERIES, LEADS "THE BLIND"—THE SUBJECTS OF ITS OPERATIONS—"BY A WAY THAT THEY KNEW NOT."*

They knew nothing of the way of mercy. Independently of the dispensation of the gospel, mercy was never revealed—never made known. Wherever you find mercy coming from God, it has more or less a reference to the dispensation of the gospel. This is the way. All men are blind by nature on this subject,—spiritually blind, knowing nothing as they ought to know. They have, it is true, a general

indistinct notion that God is merciful. Where did they get it? They have learned it from the language of the sacred writings; but they know nothing of its nature, nor how it can operate, without interfering with the claims of justice, nor how God can "be just, and yet the justifier of him that believes in Jesus." The way of mercy, then, is a way of which they know nothing.

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ may also be considered as the way. "I am the way, the truth, and the life," he observes; "no man cometh unto the Father but by me." God has pointed out our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as the medium through which he condescends to come down and visit the blind—the medium by which he takes the blind man by the hand—the medium through which we can have access to the throne of God—the medium through which he pours light upon the soul. He is the Sun of righteousness to illuminate the moral world, and to awaken the souls of men, making them sensible of their state and condition, opening their eyes, and giving them to see that they are sinners—that they are far gone from original righteousness—that they are guilty, liable to punishment, exposed to perdition—and that they have no right to call God their friend, nor to expect salvation at his hand.

A soul, thus awakened and brought into the path of genuine repentance, finds a consciousness of guilt. This enters into the very essence of repentance. A readiness to forsake sin also enters into it—a breaking off from sin by repentance, and a calling upon God for mercy; all these are connected with repentance—a consciousness of guilt, a sorrow for sin, a forsaking of it, and a calling upon God for mercy: and this is one of the "paths" which "the blind," by nature, know nothing of. You may talk to them of repentance, and they will say, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season, I will call for thee!" The mere objects of animal sensation swallow up every thought; there is no sorrow for sin—there is no consciousness of it; "Nature's blush seems, by custom,

to have been wiped off, and conscience deadened by repeated crimes!"

You observe it is said, "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in *paths* which they have not known." Then, there are more paths than one. The path of repentance is followed by the path of faith in Jesus—faith in the truths of the gospel—faith in the promises of God. What does a dead man know of this? What does a spiritually blind man know of this? He knows nothing! and it is only when God comes down and visits the soul, by bringing home his word of power with all its awakening energy, that the eyes of the understanding are open, that the judgment is informed, that the conscience is alarmed, and that the soul is led to seek after God.

Now, when the soul is brought into the path of repentance and into that of faith, there must be a discovery of Jesus in all his greatness and in all his glory—in all his mediatorial beauties of character—assuming our nature, magnifying the law, and making it honourable—fulfilling all righteousness, bearing our sins, and carrying our sorrows—making an expiation for our offences, satisfying the claims of justice, opening the door of mercy, and throwing wide the kingdom of heaven to all believers!

There is another "path," which, by nature, is "not known:" I mean, *thirdly*, THE PATH OF OBEDIENCE. Whenever the man that was blind is led by the Spirit of God to true repentance and to faith in Jesus Christ, he is also led to practical godliness. His own judgment is not the standard of his obedience. This is the language of false philosophy; the genuine standard of obedience is the authority of God. If God commands, man's duty is to obey; and although he sees not, and knows not, in what trials, difficulties, and perplexities he may be involved, in rendering obedience to the command of God, yet he knows that submission to the Divine authority is the great criterion of his actions.

There is another "path" into which all those that were blind are brought by the operative influence of Divine grace on the

heart. They are led into the way of holiness, rising higher, and shining brighter, in the divine life, till every thing sinful and unholy is eradicated from the human heart, and the soul is fitted and prepared for an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away,—reserved in heaven for all who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto everlasting life.

Loaded with sin, and deprived of spiritual sight, the soul sank from God, became enveloped with clouds of darkness; but, when visited by the Spirit of God, enjoying his pardoning love, and enabled to call God Father, by the Holy Ghost given unto it, the soul receives a greater and a still greater degree of moral perfection, till it mounts and rises, and holds communion with God, whose Spirit shines upon it with beams of bliss; it lays up treasure in heaven, "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal;" and, where the treasure is, there the heart is also. "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known." Such is the operative influence of Divine grace on its subjects. Let us now turn our attention to,

*Thirdly*, THE EFFECT PRODUCED. "I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." Who can make darkness light before them but the Fountain, the Author, the Source of light, and life, and being, and all the blessings connected with life? You may talk of learning—you may talk of philosophical inquiry, as much as you please; but all will be found cold, insignificant, and insufficient to accomplish the amazing purpose. Was it ever known, from the creation of the world, that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind? No! What would you think of a company of blind men that should unite together, even though they stood high in the general character of their profession, to operate on the eyes of a blind individual, and try to restore him to sight? You might say it would be worse than the blind leading the blind, when both would fall into the ditch. How could they

know what they were going either to procure or to perform? They know not the nature of light, nor are they acquainted with the organs of vision. Sight can never be restored to blind men but primarily by the light of heaven; and this is one of the first effects produced by the operative influence of the Spirit of God.

Even the discovery of our state and condition—our knowledge that we are under the displeasure of God—in a state of guilt—in a state of moral pollution—under the influence of every evil and diabolical passion—led captive by the enemy of our souls, at his will, are degrees of discernment that are imparted to the soul—are some of the effects produced by the operative influence of the Spirit of God. The soul that is thus awakened, is led to call upon God for mercy; and the same Spirit directs it to “behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” Its language is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Behold in him an able Saviour, a suitable Saviour, a ready Saviour, a willing Saviour, “able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him!” Behold in him every qualification which a human spirit, possessed of immortality, can possibly require.

The human spirit must live for ever. It wants happiness that shall run parallel with its existence; and, therefore, it must be interminable. Eternal happiness never can be procured unless there be an infinity of merit; and an infinity of merit implies an infinity of nature in the person who has that infinity of merit, and purchases that infinity of happiness. We learn, therefore, from hence, that, in proportion as our Lord Jesus Christ is an able Saviour, sufficient to meet the demands of all those who are brought from darkness to light, and made the partakers of his salvation; that there must be in him an infinity of nature; and an infinity of nature can only belong to God.

Believing in Jesus Christ, the soul steps into the liberty of the sons of God, and its language is, “Once was I darkness, but now am I light in the Lord.” He hath taken away the cloud, the frown-

ing cloud under which I trembled—he hath revealed himself to me as a God pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin. I can call him Father, by the Holy Ghost given to me—he has brought me from darkness into his marvellous light, and taught me to rejoice in his free and full salvation. “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me;—bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.” Thus will the Almighty make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. They may find dark and gloomy dispensations of Divine Providence, and may meet with a variety of obstructions in their journey; and, if they were in a state of blindness, they would stumble into the snares set for them, and fall into the pit: but, guided by the light of God’s Holy Spirit, there is another effect produced; they step aside, they step over, they avoid the danger—they put their trust in God, knowing that he careth for them; they have an eye to the recompense of reward; and, although here they may be required to walk through deep waters of affliction, to suffer a variety of bodily inconveniences, yet they are always ready to say, This is not my home; “for we know that, when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” That is my house and my portion: where my treasure and my heart are, there is my abiding place! Their language is,

“I’ll suffer out my threescore years,  
Till my Deliverer come  
To wipe away his servant’s tears,  
And take his exiles home.”

Thus crooked things are made straight before them; because God will either remove the obstruction out of the way or give them grace to bear and overcome it, and render it subservient to his divine purposes, in order that their graces may be refined, and that their crown of glory may shine with brighter lustre.

“I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do

unto them, and not forsake them." There is a perpetuity in the promise; but we must never forget, that, wherever there is perpetuity in promise, there is always a correspondent perpetuity expressed or implied in the character to whom it is given. God has promised that he "will do these things unto them, and not forsake them." Do these things to whom? we ask; "not forsake"—whom? who are they? Why, those that are brought by a way that they knew not—those that are conducted in paths that they have not known—those to whom darkness is made light, and crooked things are made straight—they are the people whom he will never leave nor forsake; while they continue to put their trust in him, they shall be as Mount Zion, that can never be moved.

Here, then, we have the character of the individuals expressed, the operations of divine grace pointed out, and the effects resulting from those operations; but we may carry our views beyond the bounds of time, into the regions of the eternal world, where glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life shall be their portion for ever and ever.

What, then, may we learn from the whole? Do not say that you are not blind because you can discover objects with your bodily senses. The question is, not whether you are blind as animals, but whether you are blind as spiritual beings. Where is your love to God? Where is your obedience to God? Where is your conformity to the will of God? If destitute of these things, it is a melancholy proof that spiritual blindness still hangs upon the spirit. But remember that Jesus is passing by: call upon him, for he is ready to say, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" Let your answer be, "Lord, that I may receive my sight," my spiritual sight—that I may be brought by a way that I knew not—that I may be led in paths that I have not known—that I may be led to the Saviour of the world, through the blood of the everlasting covenant!

For this end is the gospel preached; for this end the word of God was given to us; for this end God spares and calls us day after day, month after month, and

year after year. Our revolving years, our swiftly-fleeting months, the death of our friends and neighbours, the diseases of our bodies at all times, and all the calamities that flesh is heir to,—all these warn us to prepare to meet our God!

Remember, there is grace in Jesus; for he who has an infinity of merit, with regard to the perpetuity of its duration, has an infinity of merit with respect to the extent of its application; and, therefore, "whosoever will may come and take of the water of life freely." We want it—we are undone without it! "There is no other name given under heaven and among men, whereby we can be saved, but the name of Jesus." "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation!" May God, in his infinite mercy, impress these thoughts upon our minds, and lead us to holiness, happiness, and heaven, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

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#### THE EXAMPLE OF THE QUEEN OF SHEBA.

IF the queen of Sheba went from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; probably from Ethiopia, then deemed the utmost part of the earth from Jerusalem; that she might obtain instruction as to her own duties and obligations, that her own mind might be impressed and informed; what ought to be our feelings in relation to Him who is greater than Solomon?

She went, notwithstanding the distance of her residence. She had a long journey to perform, with little of those facilities and accommodation for travelling which we enjoy. And yet she went all the way to Jerusalem that she might hear and witness the wisdom of Solomon. Will not this procedure on her part condemn those of us to whom God has brought nigh his word? You have his ordinances; his Sabbaths are every week enjoyed by you—his house opened for your reception—his word in a language you can understand. That word is nigh you, and the gospel is brought near to you. Are you neglecting it? Are you taking no pains to understand it? Do you let Sabbaths and opportunities pass by unimproved?

The queen of the south will rise up in the judgment against you.

She went, notwithstanding all the anxieties of her public station. She might have pleaded, "I have so much to do, so many cares devolving upon me, that I cannot go." But she acted on different principles, and was well rewarded for her labour. Can you, then, plead any cares, any anxieties, any occupations, as a reason why you should not make every effort, submit to every sacrifice, go through every necessary difficulty, in order to attend to the wisdom of the Son of God—in order to listen to the oracles of truth—in order to seek the things that belong to your everlasting peace? Say not, "What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed?" Your attention to these things will not be interfered with by your supreme attention to the things which belong to your everlasting peace. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

She went, though uninvited. There was no offer, no appeal made to her. Mere report, general testimony that she heard, induced her to go. Can you say you are uninvited? What is this word but the record of invitation, full of mercy and love? What is the ministry but the ministry of reconciliation, exhibiting inducements and considerations to bring you to seek at once the knowledge of this greater than Solomon? Will she not rise up in the judgment against you?

She went to hear the wisdom of a mortal, at best fallible, and who, after all, was guilty of sad and criminal defection. But *you* are invited to listen to, and receive the instructions of heavenly wisdom, of eternal life. Then recollect how the queen of the south will rise up in the judgment against the men of this generation; because a greater than Solomon is here—in the Bible, in the testimony of heavenly wisdom, in the mysteries of divine truth.—*Rev. Joseph Fletcher.*

## SCRIPTURE DIFFICULTIES.

NO. V.

Gen. ix. 25:—*And Noah said, Cursed be Canaan: a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.* Infidels cavil at this curse, because it falls upon the descendants of the offender, *Ham*, the son of Noah; and Christian apologists have generally been content to reply, that Providence may and does visit the sins of the fathers upon the children. But will it not be obvious, upon looking steadily at the subject, that the cavil and the reply are alike beside the mark? For the curse fell upon the offender in his own proper person. The vices of the Canaanites could not but be their plague, whatever had been the character of *Ham*. The wretched slavery of that people was not inflicted in consequence of their father's crime; but their slavery was *foretold* as a punishment on their ancestor. Had he been a good and righteous man, he might have been spared the foresight of so much misery. It is well for a father's peace that he does not know what the wickedness of his sons will one day suffer. Milton makes his Adam cry out—

"O, visions ill foreseen! . . .

. . . . Let no man seek

Henceforth to be foretold what shall befall  
Him or his children. Evil, he may be sure,  
Which neither his foreknowing can prevent;  
And he the future evil shall no less  
In apprehension than in substance feel,  
Grievous to bear."

*Paradise Lost*, xi. 770.

It was a reward for their dutiful reverence to their father, for *Shem* and *Japheth* to know that their own piety and obedience should be in a way perpetuated to their descendants; and it was *Ham's* and *Canaan's* curse to be foretold that their descendants would be unhappy slaves. So that both the blessing and the curse fell upon the heads of those who deserved them.

## SERMON XX.

THE MESSIAH'S INCREASE.

BY THE REV. EDWARD PARSONS.

*"The increase of his government."—Isa. ix. 7.*

THE inquiry which relates to the personal character of that Being who sustains the responsibility of redemption, is most important and interesting. For what would it avail to us if this person has only inferior powers? If the Lord Jesus Christ had not been impeccable, he could not have sustained the character of a Saviour. He might have been virtuous, he might have presented an example, he might have exhibited a martyr's constancy; still, all would have been in vain: the tide of human guilt and misery would have rolled on, and men would have been borne down by it to endless despair! To suppose that God could have sent a person into the world who was not able to accomplish the work of redemption, would be to suppose that he was capable of mocking at our miseries, and sporting with our woes. What can you think of the person of the Saviour, when you are told that the responsibility of government rests on him—that he sustains the appellation of "Creator of all things by the word of his power"—that he is "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person;"—that by him all things consist—that in all things he is to have the pre-eminence—that he is the "Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace;" and that "of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end?" If you take away from us the divinity of Jesus Christ, you destroy all missionary exertions, and remove the foundation of

our common hope—all the expectations excited by his coming were vain and romantic—all hopes of missionary success are vain—he is not a universal Saviour, he shall not reign for ever and ever. Destroy this truth, and we have guilt without pardon—life without relief—the Bible without truth—revelation without importance—Christianity without peace. But, blessed be God, there is not a sound of prophecy, nor a voice from heaven, nor a revelation of truth, that does not bear on this doctrine, that does not render it luminous and interesting. He was man in order that he might redeem—he was Deity that he might be enthroned—and "of the increase of his government there shall be no end."

"The increase of his government!" And yet, apparently, as to external things, this prophecy was never likely to be realized. If we refer to his birth, he was born in a manger—if we refer to his character, he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief—if we refer to his state, the "foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but he had not where to lay his head;"—if we refer to his mission, it was to establish no earthly throne, to restore no mortal dynasty—if we refer to his name, it is not found in the annals of empires, or the records of heroes: "thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins;"—if we refer to his doctrines, they were so opposed to all the prejudices of the Jews, to all the superstitions of the Greeks, that to the one they were a stumbling-

block, to the others foolishness—if we refer to his followers, they were fishermen—to his success, multitudes who had heard him cried out, “Not this man, but Barabbas!”—to his death, it was ignominious: Jerusalem re-echoed with the cry, “Away with him, crucify him, crucify him! if he be the Christ, let him come down from the cross! he saved others, himself he cannot save!” He had glories, it is true, but they were invisible—he had a crown, but it was not seen by men. His gems were not seen, his crown was not noticed, because his brow was encircled by a crown of thorns.

How unlikely that he should ever reign—that he should ever triumph—that he should ever glory in the success of his cause! But, whatever scorn, or calumny, or opposition, it has had to encounter, that cause has succeeded; and while the fabrics of human fame, and skill, and policy, have been successively blasted, we to-night behold a pledge of its increase, and mark some of the brightness with which it is destined to blaze for ever. He must reign from pole to pole! He must reign when yonder heavens are shrivelled as a scroll, and this earth has fled away! He must reign till all his foes become his footstool, till God shall be all in all! Let us attend,

*First,* TO THE INCREASE OF HIS GOVERNMENT.

1. *This implies the extended diffusion of the knowledge of his gospel!* Who can contemplate the darkness that is in the world without alarm? Think of England, of Ireland, of China, with the millions of her sons—of India and the Ganges, with its polluted streams lighted up by so many funeral piles—of Persia, withering under the blasting hand of Mahometanism—of Africa, sunk in fanaticism or cruel barbarism! And when you have thus surveyed this scenery of general darkness and depravity, then think of the increase of the Saviour’s government! For the Sun of righteousness is not to rise on a few nations only, but to shed his brilliance over all the earth. The demons of superstition shall sink into the darkness of despair. The valley of the shadow of death shall be illuminated with

the lustre of immortality. Ignorance shall be exchanged for information; and a great multitude, which no man can number, shall join in the song of praise. For the arm of the Lord shall be made bare, and “all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God.”

“The increase of his government!”—And this implies,

2. *The triumphs of grace over the sin and misery of man.* I know that when I have said the knowledge of the gospel shall be diffused, I have said enough to rouse the most indifferent. For O what a different world would this then be! Then learning would become the legitimate garden of unsophisticated truth—then useless studies would be forsaken for the investigation of the inspired oracles—then navigation would aim to diffuse the knowledge of God our Saviour—then statesmen would desire only the real welfare of those for whom they legislate—then thrones would never be the seat of violence and of wrong. But you feel that this would not be enough; the text refers to something beyond the diffusion of truth. Millions of prodigals must be brought to the house of their Father—millions must burst the degrading chain asunder, and enter the glorious liberty of the sons of God—millions must have the agonizing tear of sorrow wiped from their cheeks, and taste the pure and holy joys of religion—many must “come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom.” O what an exhilarating prospect is this! How often have you mourned while you have seen the path that leads to ruin thronged with passengers. But, “the increase of his government!” So glorious shall be his triumphs, so complete his grace, that sooner shall the philosopher number the atoms of which this earth is composed, or the astronomer count the stars of the spangled sky, than any man number the redeemed who shall be gathered to Christ, before the last thunder shall have rumbled in our ears, or this universe be wrapped in the final flame. “Lift up thine eyes round about,

and see—all they gather themselves together, they come to thee—the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.”

“The increase of his government!” This involves,

3. *The diffusion of the peaceful influence of the gospel, in calming the passions, and allaying the violence of unhappy men.* “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.” O war, war! what pencil can portray thy deformities—what skill can calculate thy horrors! Gigantic evil!—preceded by terror—followed by devastation—fed by cursed pride—nourished by human wo. Gigantic evil! diffused wherever thou art introduced by tears, by groans, and by blood; and the shrieks of widows, and the pangs of the fatherless, are superadded to the evils of this wilderness world. Gigantic evil! thou art never satisfied; thy triumphs are those of death, thy carnival is in the grave. But, “the increase of his government!”—this shall be the influence of peace; for the gospel is peace. No sooner was it made known, but those gladiatorial spectacles, at which even females did not blush to be present, ceased. Yes! the spirit of the gospel is the spirit of peace; and it says, “If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.” And when the gospel prevails, the temple of Janus shall be closed—the sword and the shield shall be hung up—the olive branch shall wave over the globe—a voice from heaven shall say, “Peace, peace, be still!”—this universe shall become the temple of concord, amity, and love—and the angels beholding it shall return to heaven, and strike their harps to that song, “Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” Then “Ephraim shall not vex Judah, nor Judah Ephraim.” Christ shall be “the Prince of peace.” All shall be but one brotherhood—love shall be their only passion, and eternity the duration of their joy.)

“The increase of his government!” And this includes,

4. *The annihilation of all that opposes*

*his progress.* “He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.” “Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron—thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” This applies to every individual, and to every system that opposes Christ. “The increase of his government”—then the power of infidelity shall fall. That system desirous of erecting its fabric on the ruin of happiness, and capable of triumphing only in despair—inscribing on the tomb, “Death is an eternal sleep;”—this system, in morals monstrous and in reason absurd—this system shall be destroyed, and the revelation of God shall appear in all the light of truth, and in all the glory of eternity. “The increase of his government”—then, the energy of antichrist shall be destroyed. O antichrist! direful has been thy reign. The power of the lion, the cruelty of the leopard, the venom of the serpent have all been united in thee, and grievous has been the havoc which thou hast made in the field of Christ! But thou shalt be destroyed; and while there is not a demon in the bottomless pit who shall not shudder at thy fall, there is not an angel in heaven but shall rejoice: and all heaven, and earth, and hell, shall reverberate the shout, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen!” “The increase of his government”—and then Paganism shall be annihilated. Paganism, though it now triumphs over more than three hundred millions of the human race—though thousands are crushed beneath its ponderous wheels—Paganism itself shall one day disappear. “The increase of his government”—and Mahometanism, though men have been forced into the belief of it at the point of the sword, and though it has in various ways obtained its triumphs over myriads, this system also shall be completely annihilated. “The increase of his government”—and the malignancy of the Jews, though they exhibit to the world an awful proof of the retributive providence of God—though they show the brand on their brows inflicted by the wrathful hand of an incensed Jehovah, this malice and impenitence shall all be destroyed. “The increase of his govern-

ment"—and all that opposes the manifestation of his glory shall be completely destroyed. "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. Reign thou in the midst of thine enemies!" Roll on, ye years! and bring forward that blessed day, when our earth shall receive him in all the beauties of his glory, and be fully prepared for eternity! But,

*Secondly, How is THE GOVERNMENT OF CHRIST TO INCREASE?* By what interposition? By the agency of miracles?—No; the age of miracles is gone; and we have no encouragement whatever to entertain such a hope. How then is it to be increased?—By the distribution of the Bible, and suitable tracts, by pious individuals? Doubtless, this may be the means of great usefulness. How is it to be increased?—By the education of the young? True, it is said, "all thy children shall be taught of God," and so on. But we look for something more than all this. (How then shall it be increased? I answer, by the instrumentality of the preached gospel. I know this is regarded by some, as a mean, a foolish dispensation; but it is still "mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds." This was identified with the increase of Christ's government, by all the declarations of prophecy, and by the expectations of believers in all ages. This is spoken of at length by Paul, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, "We preach Christ crucified," &c. And the identity of preaching the gospel, and the success of it, is testified by Isaiah. "For as the rain cometh down from heaven," &c. The apostle John, also, tells us, "I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell in the earth," &c. And Christ himself has said, "The gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness," &c.—We are aware that some, in these extraordinarily portentous times, regard these things as enthusiasm and madness. They tell us that the change for which we seem so anxious, is to be effected by the triumphs of philosophy. The triumphs of philosophy! The triumphs of philo-

sophy!—Where have we ever heard of those triumphs? We have heard from shore after shore, of the triumphs of the religion of Christ. But the triumphs of philosophy!—Why, what shores has she ever visited? What dim eye has she ever brightened up? What funeral pile has she ever extinguished? What idol has she ever dashed from its pedestal? What profligate has she ever reclaimed? O no! the preaching of the cross!—*the preaching of the cross!*—THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS!—this only, and this everywhere, has been the means by which the ignorant have been informed, the prodigal reclaimed, the wanderer restored, the sorrowful cheered; and by this, and this only, will the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ.

But here I would suggest a caution. Do not suppose that the preaching of the cross of Christ will be the instrument of destroying heathenism, without the influences of the Holy Spirit.) I will suppose that by some supernatural power we could raise a gorgeous edifice instead of every hovel:—I will suppose that we could bring down to these temples heavenly visitants:—I will suppose that they each spake with melting eloquence; that they could exhibit a dying Saviour; that they could reveal the red right arm of the Almighty about to plunge the sword into the side of the spotless victim!—There might be astonishment, there might be alarm, but there would not be conversion. (We might as well expect to remove the world by a lever of straw, as move the spiritual world by any means irrespective of the Spirit of God.) No doubt you all respect your particular ministers;—but, I charge you, never come to hear a sermon without prayer for the Holy Spirit: never behold your minister ascend the pulpit without prayer for the Spirit: never hope for the success of missionaries without the Spirit. (On the very fore-front of all our exertions must be written, "Not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of Hosts." If we could procure missionaries as eloquent as Paul and Apollos, what would they be without the Spirit? "Neither is

he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.”)

*Thirdly, WHERE IS THE NECESSITY OR CERTAINTY OF THIS INCREASE OF THE SAVIOUR'S GOVERNMENT?—Why we may find it,*

1. *In the divine appointment.*

2. *In the claims of his mediatorial sacrifice on the cross.*

“Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore also God hath highly exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,” &c.

3. *In the very nature of his exaltation.* “God hath raised him from the dead, and set him on his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality,” &c. Eph. i. 21, 22.

4. *In the events which have lately taken place in the theatre of the world.* What has meant this havoc among monarchs, this demolition of thrones, this soaking of the ground with streams of human gore, this confusion, dismay, and sorrow? Is it to be ascribed only to the clashing of human wills, to the collision of contrary interests, to the intervention of any secondary agents? O no! we look above all these; our hope acquires an elevation above all human dynasties, and we hear a voice from the excellent glory, saying, “I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come.”)

5. *In the proofs with which we are furnished of the final evangelization of the world.* We well know that the finger of prophecy points us to a period when all the enemies of Christ shall be destroyed. We know that a period is approaching, when the Sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in his wings, to disperse the darkness of every clime. Six thousand years of sorrow have passed over this world, only as a storm that spends its fury, and then rocks itself to rest. Already, the light breaks upon the mountains:—already, the army has set out on its march, which is to subdue the

world. And soon an angel shall tell the pleasing tidings before the throne, and while all crowns are cast at the feet of Jesus, that song shall be struck up,—“Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.”)

“The increase of his government.” And now, as a Christian minister; as standing between the living and the dead; as looking forward to that time when I must stand before the throne and meet you all again;—I must ask you, if you have received this gospel, and felt its power, by the Holy Spirit? If you are not Christ's friends, you must be Christ's foes; if you are not Christ's subjects now, you must be condemned by him at the judgment day. O ye immortal souls! destined to rise in glory, or to sink in wo, have you known the power of the Saviour to redeem you? Better never to have been born, never to have been blessed with rational powers, than to have rejected Christ and his salvation!—By all that is solemn in the attributes of God;—by all that is touching in the Saviour's cross;—by the value of your souls;—by the joys of angels;—by the yells of demons;—by the agonies of the lost, and the bliss of the redeemed! I charge you to flee to the cross of Christ. If I knew that my tongue were henceforth to be silent;—that my voice would be no longer vocal;—that my body would sink into the tomb at the conclusion of this service, I would cry, Flee to the cross of Christ! Flee to the cross of Christ! See, the arms of his compassion are extended, while this voice breaks on your astonished ears, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, —Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”)

Your liberality is required this night on behalf of the Missions of the United Brethren. Their exertions, as missionaries, have been nearly coeval with their existence. Their vessel is bound even to the most barbarous and inhospitable climes, fraught with the gospel of salvation. Its ballast is Christian principle;

its sails are Christian affection; its helm is Christian prudence; and by the gales of Christian benevolence, it has been wafted over many a difficulty, and has rescued many from the grasp of the destroyer. Allow me to state some of the peculiar claims of these missions.

First, *Their missionaries have been distinguished by their attachment to evangelical truth.* They have preached, not moral ethics, not philosophy, but the gospel of Christ; the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. If these United Brethren went into heathen climes preaching any other gospel than that which is contained in the New Testament, God forbid that we should help them! But when we know that their object and end has ever been to save souls by the preaching of Christ crucified, how can we possibly withhold our support?—They are distinguished,

Secondly, *By their most peculiar and Christian liberality.* They are Moravians; but they have not acted as Moravians, but as Christians. They have aimed to make Christians: they have acted, not for the honour of a particular sect, but for the glory of the Redeemer. On the very front of their operations we may see inscribed,

“Let names, and sects, and parties fall,  
And Jesus Christ be all in all.”

This is a feeling we should all cultivate. If there be one spirit which I abhor and detest more than another, it is that cold, calculating principle of sectarianism, which adopts its own particular views, and aims to promote precisely its own opinions!—If I had the voice of an archangel, and could make it reach from one end of the universe to the other, I would say, Perish such a system as this!—No; we labour not as Methodists, as Episcopalians, as Independents, as Baptists, and so on, but as Christians. Christian is our name; the Bible is our textbook; the cross is our passion; and our word as we go on should be, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian nor Scythian, circumcision nor uncircumci-

sion, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all.” They have strong claims,

Thirdly, *Because of their great and remarkable success.* I do not wish to disparage any society; but there is one thing which must not be concealed, the number of their converts in heathen lands exceeds more than threefold, what is in their own churches at home! Thirty-eight thousand in union with them, gathered out from among the heathen, with whom they expect to spend a happy eternity, and yet they have not more than ten thousand in communion with them in all Christendom. As the blessing of God has thus been upon them, and paved their way, should not Christians in general be as liberal as possible in rendering them assistance? And this,

Fourthly, *Because it is impossible for them to maintain their own missions, without the assistance of other Christians.*

Indeed, how can it be in the power of so small a body of Christians to carry on so extensive a work. Go to the frozen shores of Labrador,—to South Africa,—to the West Indies; and when you consider their important and successful missions, I feel assured, that if you regard the Saviour’s glory, you will come forward, and assist in this great work, not only by your donations, but by your regular subscriptions. As our friends visit you from seat to seat, let each individual say, “Did Christ come down from heaven for me? Did he hang on the cross for me? Is he arranging all the dispensations of providence for me? And can I withhold my support from his cause? O no!

“But drops of grief can ne’er repay

The debt of love I owe;

Here, Lord, I give myself away,

’Tis all that I can do.”

Awake then, zeal! awake, gratitude! awake, devotion! awake, compassion! awake, benevolence! It is the call of God, my Father,—it is the call of Him who died upon the tree,—it is the call of millions of souls,—it is the call of Providence,—it is the call of judgment,—it is the call of eternity!

## SERMON XXI.

ASCRPTIONS OF PRAISE TO THE LAMB.

BY THE REV. T. ADKINS.

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*“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”—Rev. v. 12, 13.*

MAN is an ambitious creature; and a desire of obtaining some species of excellence is deeply inwrought into the very temper of the human mind. But the path to excellence is of steep ascent; and the cultivation of one part of our nature is often made at the expense of another: and a universal genius is seldom presented to the view of the world. In taking our estimate of human nature, we frequently discover that those who most excite our admiration by the gifts of their intellect, awaken our disgust by the degeneracy of their hearts. Disappointed in our search after excellence on earth, let us direct our attention to Heaven to aid us in our search. The sacred Spirit draws aside the veil that hides eternity from mortal view, and presents to our attention one in whom all imaginable virtues concentrate and shine; and who, at once, by his ineffable grandeur, must command our homage, and, by his unspeakable tenderness, must awaken our love. Listen, brethren—what sounds were those which this morning, with so unearthly a nature, burst upon our ears? It is the song of angels and it is of Jesus that they sing. O that the employment of heaven may become, for a short period, the employment of earth; and, in the temple not made with hands, and in this clay-built sanctuary, may the song be heard, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!”

The subject is as attractive as it is sublime, and, while it overwhelms us by its grandeur, allures us by its beauty. May the sacred Spirit condescend to dictate to my understanding, and to your

hearts, that, while we meditate on this subject, we may gain materials for the information of the one and for the benefit of the other.

The subject requires no ingenuity of division: the plan which I have proposed is,

I. TO MEDITATE ON THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST AS THE LAMB.

II. TO VIEW HIS DEATH.

III. TO CELEBRATE HIS PRAISE.

*First, WE ARE TO CONTEMPLATE CHRIST AS HE IS REPRESENTED UNDER THE CHARACTER OF A LAMB.*

To aid our conceptions of the varied excellencies of the Saviour, the inspired writers lay under requisition all the choicest productions of nature and all the inventions of art, and combining these, they endeavour, through the media of our fancy and feeling, to instruct our judgment and improve our minds. All images of worth are, in one part of the sacred Scriptures or another, employed by these inspired writers to delineate the character of Christ,—the Rose of Sharon, the Lily of the valley—the Root and Offspring of David—the bright and Morning Star. But O, all nature fails to represent his worth; the stars hide their heads before the lustre of this Morning Star—the sun itself hath no glories compared with this cloudless Sun of righteousness—the beauties of nature bend low before this Rose of Sharon, and “nature, to make his glories known, must mingle tongues not her own.” And yet, methinks, there is no one image so frequently employed as that in the words of the text:

“Behold,” said the precursor of the Messiah, “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” The apostle Peter speaks of him as “the Lamb without blemish and without spot.”

Here let us compare the image and the original. The lamb is an appropriate symbol of innocence and meekness, apparently as unable as unwilling to resist any injuries that may be inflicted; it bears them with a meekness and passiveness which have won for it the image we have employed. But view for a moment this symbol as illustrating the excellencies of Jesus. Never were the lamb-like virtues brought to so severe a test, and never were they so strikingly portrayed. A recluse in his cell may reason justly on the duties of forbearance and forgiveness; but it is difficult to carry into practice the dictates of sober solitude: yet Jesus gave not only the theory but the practice of every possible virtue. He chose, as a test of his excellencies, twelve disciples to be witnesses of his life and heralds of his death. Of these, one denied him, another betrayed him—and they all forsook him and fled. His motives were questioned, his character traduced, his miracles assigned to diabolical influence; he was persecuted even unto the death—nor did they cease till they had pierced with a spear that heart which had never beaten but with benignity and love. “He was led as a lamb to the slaughter.” See that brutal officer taking advantage of his defenceless situation to smite him with the palms of his hands: and shall not fire descend from heaven to avenge the insult, and to punish the impious wretch? Ah, brethren, we know not what spirit we are of! How different was the disposition that dictated the reply, “If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but, if well, why smitest thou me?” Go to the cross of Calvary—see there the heartless multitude. Hear ye not that fiendish cry, “Thou that savest others, save thyself!” And will he not call down from heaven twelve legions of angels to crush instantaneously, beneath the weight of his power, those insects of existence that rise against him? Behold the lamb-like virtues of the Son of God; his last breath

was expended in prayer for them, and he gave vent to the feelings of compassion, and to the agonies of the moment, in these words, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Adorable Lamb of God! may we follow thee, though at an infinite distance, in those steps thou hast honoured by thine example. Whilst thou art a Lamb to forgive and to suffer, may we not be spoilers nor tigers of the flock. May we bless them that curse us, and pray for them that despitefully use us. And if there be any contest, may it be the heroic effort to overcome evil by the diffusion of good.

II. MEDITATE ON THE DEATH OF CHRIST. “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.” Let us view this part of the subject in the following order:

First: *He was slain decreetively in the purposes of Jehovah.* To the all-comprehensive mind of the Deity the future lies clearly known; and he saw, even before the creation of man, his disgrace and fatal fall: though his prescience had no influence on the moral mind of man; for the prescience of the Deity and the accountability of man are perfectly harmonious, though the reconciliation may not be clearly discerned by us. That which his eye foresaw, his compassion determined to counteract; and hence, he appointed his Son to be the substitute of man. He determined to raise a new spiritual empire, reflecting his glories and resounding his praise; and, as the only way by which this could be effected, he gave that Son to take upon him our nature; to suffer, to bleed, and to die. Without arguing the point whether any other would have been available, we maintain, that if it could, the Deity would never have given up his Son to suffer and to die. We assert, therefore, that Christ was appointed to be slain in the annals of eternity. Every part of the undertaking, from the cradle to the cross—from the incarnation to the ascension—was arranged according to the council of that mind which cannot err. Especially does this apply to the very fact of his death. “Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and

slain." And on this principle it is the apostle speaks of him as "the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world."

This part of our subject may serve to correct an error into which individuals are disposed to fall with reference to the atonement of Christ, who view it as the purchase of the favour of the Deity; whereas, the very opposite is the case. The love of God was the fountain from whence the satisfaction of Christ took its rise; and that sacrifice became an honourable medium through which mercy, without money and without price, might descend to the vilest of the vile.

Secondly, *He was slain emblematically by the sacrifices under the Levitical dispensation.* It would have been incompatible with the wisdom of the Deity to have allowed those who lived prior to the incarnation, to have been ignorant of that event; or that that event should burst at once upon the world, like the sudden appearance of a meteor in a stormy sky. To enlighten the minds of those who lived previous to the coming of Christ—to usher in, by a successive development, the God-like scheme of redemption—God appointed sacrifices to be offered; between which and the victim they represented, there is so striking an agreement, that, if Scripture were silent on the subject, reason would discover that the one was an emblem of the other. Some, referring to the origin of sacrifices, tell us they arose in priestcraft. I would ask these sagacious expositors, Who were the priests in the days of Cain and Abel, when sacrifices were offered; and what priestcraft could then be displayed? And as it respects the gains of priestcraft, what gains could be obtained when the patriarchs offered the victims out of their own flock? The fact is, there is no way of accounting for the origin of sacrifices but by the appointment of God. I will refer to the first instance of sacrifice contained in the sacred Scriptures. "By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it, he being dead, yet speaketh." Here you perceive Cain and Abel brought their sacrifices;

the one was received, the other rejected. Cain brought of the first-fruits of the earth; Abel brought of the firstlings of the flock. On what principle was it that the one was received, and the other rejected? The recognition of the Supreme Being was the same image—the value of the sacrifices was nearly equal. On what principle was it, then, that one was received, and the other rejected? Cain came to God as a deist; Abel as a believer. Cain's was an offering of gratitude; Abel's was an offering of faith. Cain merely acknowledged the Deity as the moral governor of the world; Abel acknowledged him a covenant God, who had then disclosed his purposes, which should be fully developed by the sacrifice on the cross; "God testifying, of his gifts, that he was righteous." The victim which Abel offered, presented to the delighted eye of his faith, the sacrifice of the cross, once offered, which, by the effusion of its guiltless blood, should take away the sin of the world.

To this early appointment of sacrifice may be traced all the modes of sacrificing which have obtained through the world. That they did obtain through the world, is an undoubted historical fact: Europe, Asia, Africa, and America present us with the same fact. In our own country, we have only to look back a few ages, and we see the deluded Druid offering his victim on the sacrificial pile. Reason could not originate this; there is something in it repugnant to reason, and contrary to the best feelings of our hearts: and, so far from hoping this would purchase the favour of the Deity, one might have expected it would have drawn down his wrath. Since reason, therefore, could not originate this, nor discover the harmony existing between the one and the other, there is no other way of elucidating this fact than by the light that is thrown on the pages of inspiration—that it took its rise from the sacrifice established by God, and was a symbol of him who was the Lamb slain.

Thirdly, *The Lamb was slain instrumentally by the hands of the Jews.* The sacrifice of the Son of God was the deepest, direst tragedy, that was ever

acted against a person; not merely sustaining the negative character of innocence, but who was in possession of every virtue. The malice of the betrayer, the perfidy of the Jews, the rancour of the high priest,—every diabolical engine that ingenuity could invent was brought to bear upon him: and yet we have here a most striking illustration of the truth of Scripture. “He maketh the wrath of man to praise him.” So that, while they were giving vent to the rancour of their breasts, they were carrying into effect the mysterious purposes of redeeming love. For,

Fourthly, *I will remind you that he was slain really by the justice of God for the sins of his people.* Amidst the efforts of men who have opposed divine revelation, none have been more frequent, nor more disastrous in their consequences, than the endeavour to explain away the design of the death of the Son of God. He died, say they, simply as a pattern of resignation, and by no means as an atonement for sin. Why, then, was a person of such infinite dignity chosen? How can we reconcile this view of the subject with his previous conduct, and his conduct in his last moments? He had evinced fortitude such as nothing could bend; he had walked on the bosom of the deep, and had calmed its tempests into peace; and yet, when brought to the concluding scene of life, this fortitude appears to be gone. Hear you not that exclamation, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!” Go to the affecting scene of Calvary; see him bow his head, and exclaim, in an agony of grief, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” To say that this took its rise merely from the pains of nature, and the infirmity of human suffering, is to underrate his character for fortitude, and place him below the level of many of his followers who became candidates for the crown of martyrdom, and sought death in the way he suffered it. There is only one way of giving a solution to this moral enigma—that he was slain for sins not his own—that he was slain by the justice of God, as an atonement for the sins of his people, and

that “he bore our sins and carried our sorrows.”

Here for a moment let us pause and reflect. There are those who will only contemplate Christ as an example of excellence dying to perfect that excellence. But we must take a different view of it. The nails that pierced his hands, and the spear that cleft his heart, were not half so sharp as the frowns of his Father’s countenance, which for us he bore. The vinegar and the gall were not half so bitter as that cup of trembling which he took from his Father’s hand. He was rent with wounds—every nerve quivered with agony—every part of his system was convulsed in death; yet this drew not a single murmur from his lips, while our sins wrung from his heart that bitter cry, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.”

O, my brethren, and thou, O my soul! it was our sin that mingled the cup of bitterness; our sin nailed him to the cursed tree; our sin made the blackest midnight of despair to kindle in his soul; our sin pierced his side, and brought out blood and water. Come, then, and let our eye affect our heart; let us look on him whom we have pierced, while we

III. CELEBRATE HIS PRAISE. “Worthy is the Lamb to receive power,” &c. And before I enter upon the subject, I will confess it rises before me in all its naked majesty, and I almost shrink from venturing on the work of celebrating the Saviour’s praise. We feel disposed to imitate the conduct of the celebrated painter of antiquity who drew a veil over that which his pencil was unable to portray, and left the imagination to delineate that which was not depicted. But if we were to be silent, the very inanimate parts of creation would start up, and the very stones would cry out. I would remind you, however, of the mode in which the inspired writers celebrate the praise of the Son of God. They collect the most energetic expressions—heap epithet on epithet, and term on term; and their ardour, rising above view, they can only give vent to their feelings by the exclamation, “Worthy is the Lamb.”

First, *He is worthy of the trust and*

*confidence of his people.* His worthiness is founded on the perfection of his character and mediatorial work: for—glorious thought—he combined in himself all that is awful in the Godhead, with all that is attractive in the man. He unites whatever is invisible in power, and touching in goodness, and melting in mercy, and wonderful in wisdom, and unsullied in holiness; and these qualities in the Godhead and in the man, are presented to the delighted eye of adoring gratitude, as at once the God, the Surety, and the Friend of man. Were he only man, we dare not trust in him; for, “Cursed is man who trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm.” Were he only God, we dare not approach him; for a God out of a mediator is a consuming fire. But combining in himself the Godhead and the humanity, our veneration for the one, and our confidence in the other, compel us to reverence and to love.

And I would remind you that we have not only to trust him in his character of mediator, but in the perfection of his work; for what he is to himself, he is to his people. Delightful thought! There is not a necessity within the verge of imagination which any in this assembly can possess, but for which there is an abundant source in the Lamb that was slain. Are you guilty—stung with remorse for the past, and trembling with apprehension for the future? Do you see angry omnipotence rising before you and brandishing his destructive sword? The Lamb becomes your friend; there is no guilt he cannot pardon, no impurity which he cannot cleanse; and your sins shall, through the ablation of his blood, be as though they had never been. Does sin gain the victory over you, and, under the burden of an accusing conscience, do you drop the silent tear? The Lamb is your friend—Jesus has promised, “sin shall have no dominion over you;” he will supply you with unremitting communications of the supernal influences to resist, and will crown you with success. Are you the subjects of affliction? Jesus the Lamb is your friend. Has the storm beaten on your naked bosom; has wave after wave rolled over your head? Have

thy little ones been taken from thee? or hast thou consigned to the tomb the wife of thy bosom? or hast thou taken thy station at the grave of those whom thou most loved? or hast thou wept at the recollection of joys which can never return? Art thou bowing thy head like the bulrush to the storm?—The Lamb that was slain is thine unchanging friend: he is a brother born for adversity; he is the friend that sticketh closer than a brother. He combines all that is powerful to save, with all that is sympathetic to feel. Are you looking down into the grave, and into all the realities of eternity? Do you recoil from the prospect of entering on the margin of the eternal world? Jesus is thy friend: taking his station by thy side, he declares that he is the resurrection and the life; that he has the keys of hell and of death: opening the door, he bids thee go down, and promises that he will raise thee up again. In short, the Saviour, whose character we are endeavouring to place before you, is worthy of all the confidence of his people. In every situation of life—in health and in sickness—in liberty and in bondage—in prosperity and in adversity—under every aspect of trouble, and in the very agonies of death, the Lamb is worthy your confidence and your love.

Secondly, *He is worthy of the adoration and praise of the redeemed spirits above.* We are taught this from the context, in which we find that the redeemed spirits who stand around the throne join in the same song. In fact, the full excellence of the Saviour will never be known nor felt till mortality shall be swallowed up in life. Here the extent of our knowledge beclouds our understanding; the remains of indwelling sin chill the ardour of our love; here we see through a glass darkly, but then we shall see him as he is, and know him even as he is known. There the veil that hangs over our spiritual vision shall be drawn aside, and the eternal perfections of the Lamb that was slain shall stand open to your gaze, and every thing will combine to remind us of our obligations. If we look back to this vale of tears, and carry the recollection to the sins from which we have been

released; if we look to the eternity where no sin shall annoy, and where we shall associate with spirits all holy and blessed as ourselves,—all behind and before, and around and within, will combine to call forth the feelings of rapture, and the songs of eternal praise will fill the swelling choir, while it rises in peals such as earth never heard, such as heaven cannot contain: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.”

Thirdly, *He is worthy the adoration of the purest intelligences of the universe.* The angels are given into the hands of Christ for the spiritual benefit of his church. When Jesus, the Lord of angels, descended into this fallen world, there was an angelic choir which announced the glad tidings to the shepherds: “Peace on earth and good will to men.” They became his attendants through every scene of his mournful history; they ministered to him in the desert, gathered round him in the path of wo, and, ignorant, perhaps, of the design of his mission, wondered when, and where, and how this mystic scene would end. Their attendance increased as he approached the termination of his course. They supported his head as he agonized in the garden of Gethsemane; they clustered around him as he hung upon the cross:

“Around the bloody tree  
They press’d, with strong desire,  
The wondrous sight to see—  
The Lord of life expire;  
And, had their eyes have known a tear,  
They would have wept, and dropp’d it there.”

“And when array’d in light,  
He left his dark abode,  
They haste, in rapturous flight,  
Up to the throne of God;  
They waved around their golden wings,  
And struck their harps of sweetest strings.”

And when the Son of God assumed the glories of the crown; when they beheld him placed again at the right hand of God, they saw the attributes of Deity shining forth in a radiance unimaginable; they saw creation developing itself in ten thousand wonders, so as to illustrate the power, and wisdom, and glory of Jehovah; and again they struck their harps,

and united in singing, “Worthy is the Lamb.”

Fourthly, *He is worthy of the final conquest of the world.* To this he is entitled as the reward of his mediatorial work. The path of suffering was the road to honour, and from the cross he stepped into the mediatorial government of the world; for, because he “humbled himself and became obedient unto death, therefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that, at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” We see, yet, not all things put under him; but, looking down the vale of time, we contemplate the prospect which the pencil of heaven, dipped in the colours of its own rainbow, can alone describe. The dominion of the glory of the Lamb shall be continued and ever increasing; the renown of his deeds shall flow down the tide of time, and be prolonged in ceaseless rapture, even after this world shall have been doomed to destruction.

And is there a heart, this morning, that will refuse to strike a chord in this un-earthly choir? Is there a bosom so insensible that the excellencies of the Saviour have no attraction? I ask you, and pray that you may ask yourselves, What think you of Christ? Tell me what you think of *him*, and I will tell you what he thinks of you; tell me what you think of *him*, and I will tell you what you think of the world, of sin, of the moral attributes of the Deity, of the value of your souls.

This is the medium through which you must discover these objects in a practical light; but if you do it without a reference to the Lamb, sin will have no terrors, and will awaken no disgust; the attributes of the Deity will present no attractions; your soul will lose its value in your own estimation, and eternity will be destitute of all that is grand. I beseech you to lay this to heart; try your characters by this test. What think you of Christ? Imperfect as this exhibition of his excellencies has been, you must discover, that if you have no estimation

for him, it is a fearful indication that there is a spiritual blindness clouding your faculties, and an awful obduracy in your heart. I require no other proof of the deep seated depravity of the soul, than to ascertain that it is destitute of love to Christ; and I require no more decided proof of your being in a state of safety, than by your disclosing such spiritual enlivening views as will compel you to unite in the exclamation on which we have been meditating, "Worthy is the Lamb."

Again I recommend you to study the character of Christ. If you are guilty, here is pardon; if you are unholy, here alone is the fountain that can cleanse; if you are in affliction, here alone is support: dying, through him alone can you obtain eternal life.

May the Holy Spirit write on your hearts, and on the tablet of your minds, that which has been delivered in accordance with his will; and his name shall have the praise for ever and ever.

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WRITERS OF THE SCRIPTURES—WISE AND GOOD MEN.

WHO will call in question the understanding or the accomplishments of Moses? Under what circumstances of honour has his name been transmitted through ages and generations, till, irradiated with all its pristine glory, it has reached even these latter days! To a mind far above the common standard—to talents the most illustrious, he added all the learning of the Egyptians. Born at the fountain head of literature, he drank copious draughts of the salutary stream. Before him the celebrated lawgivers of antiquity, although much later than this renowned legislator, shrink away, as the stars which shine through the night fade before the first tints of the morning, and hide their diminished heads when the sun uncovers his radiance. In like manner, all the writers of the Old and New Testaments demand our respect as men of supereminent talents, and of solid wisdom. No one can read those psalms which are ascribed to the king of Israel, and imagine that David was a man of a common understanding. The fragments

which have descended to us from Solomon, abundantly confirm the decision of the Scriptures in naming him the wisest of men. He must be strangely destitute of taste, who can read, unmoved, the majestic and sublime productions of Isaiah. We disdain to answer the bold, unfounded, ignorant assertions of the author of "The Age of Reason," who says, that "a school-boy should be punished for producing a book so full of bombast and incongruity as the book called Isaiah." A man who can thus speak of a production so truly sublime, upon general, we might say universal consent, has forfeited all claim to criticism; and he must feel something like degradation who should sit down to answer so palpable a misrepresentation. We pass over the words of Jesus Christ, for surely it will be admitted that "never man spake as this man." Luke rises before us as claiming to rank high in respectability. His writings will appear to any unprejudiced mind impressed with the stamp of genius and of literature. In support of this position is it necessary to do more than appeal to the short and elegant preface to his gospel; after which, having once for all introduced himself, he disappears, and the historian is lost in the narrative? "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which, from the beginning, were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word: It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee, in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed." The apostle Paul is a name too great to be passed over in silence. His defence before Agrippa is a masterpiece of genuine eloquence and feeling; and he who can deny it, after reading the sentence with which it closes, appears to us most unreasonably prejudiced, and irreclaimable by the force of evidence. "Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou,

but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am—except these bonds!" His writings, from first to last, discover an extraordinary mind, and a fund of intelligence worthy a disciple who sat at the feet of Gamaliel. Those who were unlettered men, have no less a claim upon our respectful attention. Who does not perceive a blaze of genius and of talent bursting through all the obscurity of their birth, and counteracting the original narrowness of their education? They were *all* wise men; and their wisdom carried with it the most decisive evidence that it was from above: it was "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and of good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

We have pronounced but a small part of their eulogium, in saying that they were wise men; for talents are often found united to vice; but they were also eminently good men. They *were* men. We do not design to hold them up to your view as *perfect* characters; for such a representation would neither accord with truth, nor agree with their pretensions; but they were as perfect as humanity, in its most exalted state upon earth, seems capable of being. The charges against the character of David have been heavy, but they have been as ably refuted. The light which he enjoyed was small, compared with the meridian glory which illumines our walk through life. And he must have a hard heart, and a most unreasonable conscience, who can urge David's failings against him with much severity, after the contrition which he felt and expressed. Considered in connexion with the other and excellent parts of his character, these defects resemble the dark spots which, to a philosophic and scrutinizing eye, appear on the sun's disk; but which, to any unassisted organ of vision, are swallowed up in the blaze of his glory. In the writings and the lives of the apostles, what piety, what benevo-

lence, what devotion, what love to God and to man, are visible! What genuine zeal did they manifest! A zeal distinguished from mere enthusiasm, both in its object and in its tendency! No good man can read these writings—such is their holy fervour and such their exalted piety—without being made both wiser and better! Do you not discern in them hearts weaned from the present world, and fired with the glorious prospects of futurity? Do you not perceive in all things an integrity which made them ardent in the support of their cause, and ready to suffer every extremity for it? Yet that integrity, and that ardour, mingled with humility, temperance, mildness, goodness, and truth! Do they not continually insist upon these things as the genuine effects, the necessary consequences, and the distinguishing characteristics of their religion? O let any unprejudiced person calmly sit down to read their lives, where all their weaknesses appear, and where none of their faults are extenuated, and he must conclude that they were good men!

We might, without departing much from our plan, draw up, by way of contrast, the lives and actions of the principal adversaries of revelation, and oppose them to those of its first assertors. We think that the confessions of Rousseau would look but ill when placed by the penitential tears of Peter, or the contrite sighs of David. The licentious life, and the gloomy death of Voltaire, would be a striking contrast to the labours, the patience, the perils, and, above all, the triumphant expiring moments of Paul. We shall not, however, pursue this subject. These lives will be contrasted another day. But we will add, that, before the patrons of infidelity speak so bitterly of the failings of David, they should place by his life the conduct of its most strenuous and most distinguished advocates; and the comparison would reflect but little honour and little credit upon themselves.—*Collyer*.

## SERMON XXII.

THE DUTY AND ADVANTAGES OF RELIGIOUS MEDITATION.

BY THE LATE REV. E. IRVING, M.A.

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*“And Isaac went to meditate in the fields at eventide.”—Gen. xxiv. 63.*

WHOSOEVER hath walked forth, like the patriarch, about the eventide, into the silent and retired places of nature, and seen the dusky mantle of twilight falling upon the earth, must have felt stealing over his own breast, a state of repose and a sober shade of thought in harmony with the aspect of nature around him; for there is a twilight of contemplation in the soul, midway between the excitement of action and the deadness of slumber—the stir of passion is at rest, and the noisy calls of interest have subsided—and a pensive mood cometh on rich with sober reflections—and the soul careth not for a companion to express herself before; and if, by chance, she hath one by her side, both she and her companion steal into themselves, and though they love each other dearly, they fear to intrude upon the sweet and unperturbed work, which the soul is carrying on in her sacred recesses: and the soul being left alone peruseth herself, and meditates her condition, and the body keepeth harmony with the deep and solemn occupation of the mind by a slow and solemn pace; and the eye to catch no disturbance casteth itself upon the ground, and the ear is conscious only to the stillness of nature, and we seem to hear the stream of time flowing past us. When outward nature is so stripped of its gay colouring, and divested of its turbulent and noisy agitation, and the body hath also attuned itself to the mood of the soul, then cometh to the breast some of the most profitable and delightful moods, which it ever partakes in this changeful being.

The good and ill of the past come before us, dressed in sober colours, the gay divested of vain-glory, the evil divested of remorse; every thing sobered down like nature in its twilight varieties of dress, its splendours shaded, its defects veiled, its asperities smoothed, and altogether softened and harmonized by the witching influence of the solemn hour;—and our present occupation cometh up for judgment before us, and we meditate its usefulness and its end; then errors are not ashamed to confess themselves, and the soul not averse to consider them, and better purposes and resolutions are engendered. The vanity of life now showeth itself without a preacher, its speedy passage, like a morning cloud, its disappointments, and its sorrows, and all its troubles. The soul becomes philosophical of her own accord, she wonders at her thoughtfulness, and the richness of her reveries afford her delight: then she ascendeth from herself to her Creator, from earth to heaven; and, haply, to assist her meditations, she strayeth to the sacred habitations of the dead, or wandereth beneath the lonely ruins of ancient temples, when the solemn moon, queen of silence, stealeth forth to rule the darkness of the night, and the stars come forth to attend her course. Then looking up unto the heavens, to the moon, and to the stars, which God hath ordained, we feel with the psalmist, “What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?” and when we look upon the earth, falling asleep under the watchful moon, the

birds silent in their nests, and the beasts on their grassy couches, and the hum of busy men silenced by sleep, the sister of the grave; then, if ever, the voices of immortality lift themselves within the bosom of man, and he feeleth his dignity of nature, which the commerce of the world obscureth, and he calmly looketh forward to his change, and he loveth the Saviour who openeth up life and immortality beyond death and the grave; his soul passeth upwards to the communion of God, and in this recess from worldly turmoil, he hath the presence of divine thought, and a sort of intermediate state between the activity of life and the rest of the grave.

Our Saviour, in the days of his flesh, sought the aid of silence, and solitude, and shade, to hold communion with his heavenly Father. After the bustle of crowds and severe occupation at Capernaum, when all the sick of the neighbourhood had been brought unto him to be healed, and he had healed them, he retired by break of day, he departed and went into a desert place. So also, after feeding the multitude with the loaves and fishes, he departed unto a mountain, and spent the whole night in prayer. So also, during his residence at Jerusalem, he taught in the temple by day, and at night he withdrew to the mount of Olives. Showing to us that the infirmities of mortality which he partook of, required to be healed with these solacements of quiet and meditation in order to act in concert with the higher faculties of the divine Spirit within him. So also we showed in one of our evening discourses, that his servants in the ministry have found their strength in such secret retirements from the busy world. Our fathers, perceiving the fitness of this, did erect those ancient cathedral churches, monuments of their piety and art, and as it were a grove of stony arch work, where with the dead beneath your feet, and monuments of the worthy dead around the walls, and clustering arches over our head, with a dim religious light, like the light of twilight, around you, the soul might partake a solitude in the midst of populous and noisy cities, and have all the advantages

which place and association and surrounding scenery can give for solemn and devout thoughts; and O! I do grudge the loss of that spirit of the olden time, which, though leagued with superstition, did so much for the honour and accommodation of religion, putting to shame the mercantile spirit of these days, which findeth infinite means to waste on assembly rooms, and club houses, and domestic villas, and regal palaces, while it is content to do worship under the most meagre, unsubstantial shell work, which will hardly bear the strife of the elements, much less the hand of destructive time.

Even the heathens, both the philosophers and priests, were alive to the connexion between retirement and religion—between the mystery of twilight and the mysteriousness of things unseen. The Pythagoreans, who brought philosophy into Greece from eastern climes—the Druids, before whose fearful altars our fathers bowed, followed their science and their religion beneath the canopy of shady groves—and the sybils dwelt in solitary caves, and the ancient mysteries were transacted in darkness, and the most revered shrine of Jove was hid in the bowels of the desert, and the superstitions which, from time to time, brought Israel under heaven's scourge, were transacted in groves and under high places. All which being combined in the examples of holy writ, and confirmed by every one's experience, proves it to be the voice of nature, ever certifying that the things of the world unseen are fostered by meditation and retirement, and that these are essential parts of a religious man's occupation: proving that no people have been so ignorant as not to perceive that the things of futurity are best reflected on when the things of time are out of sight, and that the world to come ariseth before us as the world that is departed from us, and that God cannot come where Mammon or Belial or any god of this world is exercising their sway; which great truth it doth only establish the more, that designing men have been able to take advantage of seclusion and mystery, in order to dupe and deceive mankind. If God

were not more easily apprehended in solitude than in open busy places, heathen priests and Christian monks would not have foregone the pleasures of life, and retired to cells and privacies in order the more effectually to overawe the people; and there would have been no hermits in caves of the earth, nor dervises upon the edge of deserts, nor any other form of mortification and concealment; these tricks of superstition are addressed to real propensities of the mind, otherwise they would take no hold, and bring no profit; and the universality with which these devices of Satan have succeeded, doth only prove more strongly the universality of the principle concerning which I discourse, that religion is essentially connected with retirement, and solitude, and meditation, and can hardly be felt in full power apart from them.

We who live in cities are, in a great degree, cut off from imitating the example of Jesus, and the patriarchs, and holy men. We cannot go forth into the field at eventide to meditate; nor is there any mount hard by, like the Mount of Olives, to which we can retreat when night falleth upon the earth. And though no walls be around our city, and no barrier defend our going out or coming in, we are shut in by its very extent, and cannot easily escape from its noise and occupation; and the twilight is chosen by layers in wait to molest the goings out and in of the inhabitants, and temptation spreadeth its wiles for the unwary, and unseemly sights are obtruded before our eyes; and so most of us are effectually hindered from the enjoyments of these meditative moods, which it is the object of this discourse to recommend. We live the most of us in business and bustle, activity is in the movement, and anxiety in the countenance of almost every face we meet through the live-long day; the interests and concerns of life infix and entwine with us, and will not be rebuked away from our thoughts; and when an interval of leisure and relaxation hath occurred, it is so forestalled by pastimes and public amusements, and there are outstanding so many engagements to gay and social companies, that truly time is

too short to fulfil them all; our spirits are exhausted; every thing but active engagement, or as active dissipation, is excluded, and the mind never comes into that quiet and repose which is necessary for reflection and meditation on its own estate. Nature speaks and cries aloud against the spoliation to which cities subject her, and so soon as we are able she prompts us, for a part of the year, to escape out of the midst of the unnatural excitement, and leave her to her own various moods and inclinations; or, if we allow not ourselves these occasional relaxations, and drudge it all the year, at our mechanical or commercial callings, it is in the distant hope—most fondly cherished though distant—of being at length able to leave altogether these abodes of bustling men, and imbosom our family in some sweet rural retirement, where we may pass our lives in peace. But, alas! ere that much desired time arrives, it generally happens that the mind, which cannot always endure, hath lost the noble faculty of exciting herself by thought, or of being excited by nature's silent and changeful moods; and being removed from what agitated and stirred her powers in populous cities, she grows stagnant and corruptive, and breeding melancholy and disquiet humour, seeks in self-defence the world's agitations again: and so it cometh to pass that the powers of reflection and meditation, and prayer and self-examination, and heavenly mindedness, and whatever else is above the world, are utterly lost, and the soul is bound down and fettered to things seen and temporal, and lost from almost every occasion of being acted upon by the creation or providence of God. The active world, which was to be only her stage, hath become the city of her habitation; the body and the things of this world which were intended for the furniture and dress, with which she was to play her part, have become the ornaments and only happiness of the soul, the end and object of her very being, her consummation of good or of evil.

I do not know how it is with other men who endeavour to serve their God, and keep him ever present in their minds,

but I can speak for myself, that the greatest obstacle I find to such heavenward communication, is the frequency of engagements, and the invasion of business, the one savouring of the other so much, that both avail equally to divert the soul from her own precious cogitations; duties press one upon every side, which by reason of their multitude, being only half discharged, the mind hath no pleasure to reflect upon when they are past, and so many remain undone, and so many stand over against the first unoccupied moment, that from morn to even, from the time we leave our bed-chamber, till we enter it again, what is it, but a succession of waves succeeding each other, and wearing us out till sleep comes more delicious than activity, and oblivion more pleasant than consciousness, and dreams more happy, because more tranquil than realities. Who, during the day, can stretch his limbs upon his couch, and say, Now it is over and ended, I will sequester myself, I will give my mind the reins, and let it have its course? Who can say, Now the world is shut out, nothing waits for me, and I wait for nothing, let me have a space for meditating my latter end, and considering the end and issue of my days? Now will I make me glad with a little converse and communication with my Maker. I will exalt my thoughts to heaven; I will put the earth under my feet, and I will meditate upon the providence of God, which ruleth over all. Now also will I escape from the span of time, and the house of my earthly tabernacle, and give my soul up to thoughts of eternity and infinity. With Job I will meditate the ancient of days, and lose myself amongst the unsearchable wonders of his power. With David I will contemplate the history of his loving kindness to every thing that liveth, and call upon all things in all parts of his dominions, to magnify his name, or with Solomon, I will go to the depths of wisdom, and discover the vanity of all things beneath the sun; or with Paul, I will endeavour to apprehend with all saints what is the height, and the length, and the depth of the love of God in Christ Jesus, which passeth knowledge; or

with John in Patmos, I will unravel the mysteries of the future, and hold communion with the inhabitants of the world unseen!

In want of such devout exercises of calm thought and undisturbed meditation our city religion hath in it little mellowness; it is formal, ceremonial, fashionable, active, talkative, and worldly; and it hath little tenderness of feeling and softness; it is shut up in doctrines which can only pass current from mouth to mouth, which doctrines want expansion over the soul and spirit of human fellowship. City congregations have, in general, no taste for the contemplative moods of the mind, but call out for the strong excitement of controversy, declamation, or passion; something that may stir them in the way after which they are accustomed to be stirred by the occurrences of every-day life; the simplicity of the pastor must be cast off, and pastoral duties foregone for a sort of religious agency, and business, and a commerce of religion, to all ends of the earth, producing in spiritual matters such a character and spirit as are produced in secular matters by the commerce of merchandise; and prayer is the exercise of a formal hour, and hath its stated intervals; but there wanteth the spirit of prayer which ever converseth with God, and beareth the soul on high to commune with his holiness; for the domains of God and of Mammon border so closely upon each other in cities, that the noisome vapours and exhalations of the one, hinder the plants and fruits of the other from reaching their full growth, and putting on their fairest appearance. We ought, therefore, men and brethren, whose lot is cast in this populous city, and whose appointment from God it is, to do our offices therein faithfully and well, to be upon our guard against these the temptations of our dwelling place, and take precautions that they do not destroy our knowledge of ourselves, and our fellowship with God. For whatever we may gain is a poor reward for the loss of those sweet enjoyments which grow out of an examination of our ways, and a well ordering of them before the Lord; and what-

ever we may do outwardly for the sake of our happiness, is nothing so important as that which we may do inwardly, by a right regulation of our desires and affections and passions, from which inward discipline we are cut off if we lend ourselves to the incessant calls that accumulate upon us from without.

Therefore, I do recommend to my flock, and to all who hear me, to make a stand against the oppression of the world, however it may recommend itself, and to have of every day a clear and vacant space to themselves, to make of it what they please. Let no pushing of business, as it is called, let no harvest of gain, let no promises of pleasure, nay more, let no desires to serve another, or to profit the commonwealth, or to superintend charities, or to do and transact any thing however good and noble it may be, hinder you of a period in every day, whereon this world hath no claims, and wherein you may do or not do, read or not read, write or not write, but be yourselves your own free masters to attend to those interests in which none in the universe save you yourself is concerned. This world, with all the good or ill, profit or loss, within its continent, can nothing avail to gain you that other world in which you are to be for ever miserable or happy, seeing all ye make, and all men ye oblige and serve, with all ye enjoy, can ye stand in no stead to obtain an abundant entrance into the joy of your Lord, which, whenever it is obtained, is obtained through solitary reflection on our ways, and solitary prayer for mercy, and solitary perusal of the Scripture, solitary meditations, reflections, and resolutions. Seeing these future things are so attained unto, do I ask of you, who are candidates for them, too much, when I ask you to have a season of each precious day to the exercise of such solitary avocation with the things of the world unseen. Although you may already be advanced in the knowledge and enjoyment of these everlasting things, they will fade from your possession if ye do not court them and converse with them alone, even as love fadeth when its object is never present or never thought of, or transferreth itself to

some object which is always soliciting the eye with its presence, and the heart with its winning charms. This call, therefore, for a season of each day, is not to be prudently resisted by any one, saint or sinner, to whom I now speak; and though it be true that God, in calling sinners to repentance, doth generally use the ministry of the word in public places, the well timed counsels of religious friends, good examples, and other things not met with in solitude; yet when we are by these means called to thought, if we take not our refuge in solitary meditation, the seed will not take root, but will be plucked away by the angels of the evil one, or burnt up by heats and fires of pleasure, or choked by the cares and anxieties of active life. And besides, it seemeth to me a kind of degradation of ourselves, thus to commit the vessels in which our eternity is embarked to the random influence of wind and tide, instead of steering by the guidance of our own reason, and that better light which God hath shed on us from above. This interval of self-possession which I move every one to inquire after, and desire and claim as his own right for God and eternity—and which no master would refuse to his most menial servant, if he knew that it was sought for an end that would return him profit manifold—this interval which all who hear me may possess without trenching upon necessary action or necessary rest, I would have you to fill up with those employments of the mind that are intermediate between action and rest, necessary to bring the one gently on, and to invigorate and direct the other to calm thought and meditation; I would have it devoted to the remembering of the past, to the weighing of the present, and to the forecasting of the future. But, verily, though the mind were to do nothing but lie upon its wearied oars, and gather her strength again, it is her sacred right, and if you refuse it, she will lose sprightliness, originality, determination, and all the other noble qualities of self-guidance, and fall into the drudging regularity, the measured pace and joyless occupation of slavery, being truly a slave, not to another, per-

haps, but to that great leviathan which enslaves us all, the present evil world. To favour these contemplative moods, let every one who can, escape into the solitude of nature, and stretch himself at ease amidst her soft and silent scenes; and let those to whom this is forbidden, separate themselves to their private chambers, and spreading before them the book of God, give themselves largely and liberally to consider all his wonderful works and gracious ways unto the children of men. Their checkered life let them review—its wayward courses—its sinful wandering—its various escapes—its utter unprofitableness; and over against these set the bounty of God, his long suffering, his special mercy, his evident working for our welfare, his naming of us, his calling of us, his blessing us with his grace, and the right hand of his power, which hath brought us up hitherto and hitherto defended us. Then in such meditations God's Spirit will take a part, and prompt you to fall upon your knees and render him thanks. You will pay your vows unto the Lord, and devote before him the service of your future life; and the consolations of the Holy One shall descend upon you, and with a peace that passeth understanding you shall lay yourselves down into the lap of his carefulness, and sweet sleep after such holy occupation shall be commanded to fall upon you, and your visions of the night shall not trouble you, and in the morning you shall awake and walk in your uprightness; and when eventide comes again it will bring with it its season of thought and reflection; and new revelations shall be made to you from above, and your way well ordered and sure shall shine more and more unto the perfect day.

Now I know that your ignorant wits, city bred, and by the excitement of the city rendered incapable of such meditative moods, do, when occupation of business ceases, look out for occupation of amusement, and after days passed in offices, chambers, and counting-houses, think the evenings best spent in parties, in theatres, in crowded assemblies. To such what hath been said will appear

weak and silly sentiment, the fruit of an affected or fanciful brain; in which they do but demonstrate the complete eradication of those finer parts of nature to which this discourse addresseth itself. For these contemplative moods, which I have sought to turn to the service of religion, are not the resting time merely of the mind, but the breeding time: then it is creative, and engenders new conceptions and purposes; then it alters, and amends, and occupies itself with speculations about the end and meaning of human life. It here achieves its liberation from the bondage of custom, and, away from noise and folly, takes its fill of calmness and freedom; and I will be bold to say, that no man was ever blessed to design aught beneficial to his kind, to change any of the currents of custom, who did not devote and addict himself much to retirement and solitude; and no man was ever converted from the error of his ways without much private meditation, secret prayer, and self-examination. Nay, nature speaks in behalf of the lesson which I this day endeavour to inculcate—speaks within the bosom of man, woman, and child. What meaneth that jocund face, and merry heart, and joyous spirit, with which people leave the noise of the city behind them? What means that roving of the eye unwearied over the aspects of the country? Why do poets ever cull their images of happiness and innocence from the country? Why do we citizens plant herbs and flowers around and in our very houses? Why do we ornament the hangings and furniture of our chambers with rural scenes?—hang pictures of the country upon our walls? Why is it, but that there are parts of our soul which call for nature in her simple form, which long after her silence and verdure, and which, feeling themselves ready to perish through much bustle and occupation, do, by a desperate effort, serve themselves therewith, and will construct emblems of the country everywhere, importing its productions, planting bowers, and shady walks, and evergreens, in the very heart of the most populous and living quarters of the town. Therefore, in the lesson and argument of this discourse I am borne out by

the voice of universal nature; universal except in a few, who, never escaping during the time when soul and body are conformed, out of the alley or lane in that quarter of the city where they were born, become a sort of fixture which cannot bear to be removed. But what are such unfortunate people? they are, among men, what the dwarfish and stunted shrubs of the city are to the noble and graceful trunks which display themselves in their natural woodlands.

I know, moreover, that the persons of the city, showing the same prejudices in another kind, will say that all this concerning which I discourse matters nothing, provided the family devotion be regularly attended to, and religious conversations are regularly held, and the temple attended upon, and the weighty matters of the church regarded. But what, I ask, is the devotion that cometh not out of contemplation of God's works? or what is the prayer that proceedeth not from the knowledge of our own hearts? Truly, I have heard a peasant's prayer, the prayer of a man who conversed with his God, and his own soul more informed with the spirit of piety, broader and deeper in its religious sentiment, and nobler in its ascriptions of praise and utterance of humility, than would have supplied the formality and cant of many city conventicles. And for the religious conversations of cities, I hold them the most futile and unprofitable speculations which the world holds; places for display, for affectation, for every thing but true-hearted piety, whose right place is in the visiting of the sick, and the comforting of the afflicted, and the upholding of the destitute. They are a sort of war of opinions, a muster of parties, an idolatry of some ephemeral creature dressed in his brief popularity, and distracting and not attracting pious and humble and heavenly moods. And for temple service, to go no further than this of our own, which we endeavour our best to sanctify, what an assemblage of staring varieties, prying irreverent talkings, by which the pious and contemplative moods of the true worshippers are put to flight, their virtuous strains of conversation put out of counte-

nance, and self-examination scared away, which I hold to be the foundation-stone of religious edification; and I myself, who endeavour, as God gives me the ability, with sincerity and singleness of heart, to lead this congregation, have need of all my grace and fortitude to be hindered from giving way to some of the humours into which the consciousness of such conditions as surround me would betray a less resolute man. Which rebuke, brethren, take not amiss—those of my congregation know me too well to think that I would say any thing unkind, and they lament the evil as much as I can do. I speak not of them—I speak not against any one, I simply point to the effect which city bustle and excitement have upon the most sacred service of religion.

O! brethren, I have seen Sabbath sights, and joined in Sabbath worships, which took the heart with their simplicity, and ravished it with sublime emotions. I have crossed the hills in the sober and contemplative autumn, to reach the retired lonely church betimes, and as we descended towards the simple edifice, whither every heart and every foot directed itself from the country around, on the Sabbath morn, we beheld issuing from every vale and mountain glen, its little train of worshippers coming up to the congregation of the Lord's house, around which the bones of their fathers reposed, near to which reposed the bones of one who had in cold blood fallen for his God, at the hands of that wretched man, the hero of our northern romances; bones oft visited by pious feet, and covered on the hill side, where they lie with a stone bearing an inscription not to be exceeded for substance by any in that sacred mausoleum, which containeth the ashes of those whom the nation delighteth to honour. In so holy a place the people assembled under a roof, where ye of the plentiful south would not have lodged the porter of your gate. But under that roof the people sat and sung their Maker's praise, "tuning their hearts, by far the noblest aim," and the pastor poured forth to God the simple wants of the people, and poured into their attentive ears the scope

of Christian doctrine and duty, and having filled the hearts of his flock with his consolations, parted with them after much blessing and mutual congratulation, and the people went on their way rejoicing. O! what meaning there was in the whole! what piety! what intelligence! what simplicity! The men were shepherds and came up in their shepherds' guise, and the very brute, the shepherd's servant and companion, rejoiced to come at his feet. O! it was a Sabbath. a Sabbath of rest! the body and soul were equally refreshed, and all nature around seemed to sympathize in the unity which breathed through the congregation; and the fruits of such Sabbaths were manifest. The people were healthy, manly, and happy; and though the parish was of large extent, there was not in all its borders a house for dispensing fermented liquors, those poisons of the land. But were the people stupid? yes, in what an over-excited citizen would call stupid, that is they cared not for courts or parliaments, for plays, routs, or assemblies, but they cared for their wives and children, their laws, their religion, and their God; and they sang their own native songs in their native vales, songs which the men I speak of can alone imagine and compose, and from whom we citizens have to be served with songs and melodies too, for we can make none such ourselves. Now these comparisons mislead, and I fear I may show unkindness, but I mean none; I mean only the statements of truth, that you, my friends, may be moved to take thought of these matters, and set your time in order before the Lord, and stand for leisure and liberty against the manifold invasions to which we are exposed. For until you do so your religion will not prosper—your accounts with God and eternity will remain unsettled—your conscience will remain confused—your soul unoccupied—your religious fruits immature. It is as necessary as activity and occupation. This world calls for the latter, and I have thought it my duty as your pastor to call for the former. Refuse it not for the sake of your spiritual well-doing. Commune with yourselves in secret. Enter into your closets and

pray unto your Father which is in secret, and your Father which is in secret shall reward you openly. Fear not the loss of time or of fortune, but retire to seek the Lord, and he will light upon you the light of his countenance, which shall give you more joy than when your corn and wine and oil do most abound.

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DEATH SCENE.

WE may as well think of seeking a refuge in the applause of men, from the condemnation of God, as we may think of seeking a refuge in the power or the skill of men, from the mandate of God, that our breath shall depart from us. And have you never thought, when called to the chamber of the dying man, when you saw the warning of death upon his countenance, and how its symptoms gathered and grew, and got the ascendancy over all the ministrations of human care and of human tenderness, when it every day became more visible, that the patient was drawing to his close, and that nothing in the whole compass of art, or any of its resources, could stay the advances of the sure and last malady, have you never thought on seeing the bed of the sufferer surrounded by other comforters than those of the patriarch, (Job,) when from morning to night, and from night to morning, the watchful family sat at his couch, and guarded his broken slumbers, and interpreted all his signals, and tried to hide from his observation the tears which attested him to be the kindest of parents, when the sad anticipation spread its gloomy stillness over the household, and even sent forth an air of seriousness and concern upon the men of other families; when you have witnessed the despair of friends, who could only turn to cry at the spectacle of his last agonies, and had seen how little it was that weeping children and inquiring neighbours could do for him, when you have contrasted the unrelenting necessity of the grave, with the feebleness of every surrounding endeavour to ward it, has the thought never entered within you—How powerless is the desire of man! how sure and how resistless is the decree of God!"—*Chalmers.*

## SERMON XXIII.

A MESSAGE FROM GOD.

BY THE REV. T. RAFFLES, D.D.

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*“And Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee.”—Judg. iii. 20.*

AND perhaps you are ready to say, if we were certain you had—if we were sure that God had especially commissioned you to address us—if you were to work some miracle in order to confirm your high authority, we should listen to you this evening with the most profound reverence, and with the deepest awe—we should hang upon your lips with the utmost attention, and drink in your words with avidity as you uttered them; but we see before us a man of like passions with ourselves; you are attended by no signs of divine inspiration; there is nothing about you this evening beyond your ordinary appearance in the house of God;—what mean you then, by saying, “I have a message from God unto thee?” Have you, indeed, had any immediate communication from heaven concerning us? No. Have you any new revelation to deliver to us? No; and yet, “I have a message from God unto you:” that message is in this book—this book that many of you neglect and despise—this book that many of you hate and oppose—this book that some have even dared to pronounce a fiction and a fraud: but a book which, notwithstanding all the opposition, and scorn, and contempt by which it is encompassed, contains a message from the Most High to the human race; and that message, it is my duty this evening, as far as I myself understand it, and as far as our limited time will allow, to deliver unto you.

“I have a message from God unto you.” And I have not a message to one

or two only in the congregation; I have not a message to a select part of this assembly; I have a message to you all. You are all equally interested in it: I have a message to each of you in your turn; and O, that conscience were alive and faithful, to apply that to each individual which belongs to him! And here I am free to confess, I feel apprehension and alarm, lest the message should be misapplied—lest some should pervert it, and wrest it to their own destruction—lest some should take what does not belong to them, and reject what is obviously addressed to them—lest what is designed to check the presumption of this man, should only feed the despair of that; but, however much the message may be misinterpreted, misapplied, scorned or rejected; though it should prove to some the savour of death unto death, in the delivery of it, I dare not forego a faithful and a full disclosure; I must discharge the solemn trust committed to me, and look up to Him who searches the heart, for the gracious influences of his Holy Spirit, to apply what belongs to each individual as I advance.

I have a message then—O that you may listen—a message from God unto you. You are acquainted with the history with which the words of my text are connected. Eglon was a haughty tyrant, and a cruel persecutor of the people of God; and Ehud was raised up to be their deliverer, by executing the vengeance of incensed Heaven upon the tyrant. In order the more effectually to

secure his purpose, he sought a private interview with the monarch, on the ground that he had a solemn message to him. The unwary king, thrown off his guard by the secret influence of Heaven that was thus hurrying him onward to his own destruction, commanded his servants to retire. Then said Ehud, "I have a message from God unto thee;" and rising up to receive it with a reverence that might put many of us to the blush, Ehud caught the prey in the snare he had laid, and plunged his dagger into the monster's heart. He had indeed a message. He was in his summer parlour, the scene of his luxurious retirement, the scene of his enjoyment and repose, but which was suddenly converted into his sepulchre; and the bloody tyrant, without warning, without preparation, was summoned to appear at that tribunal where the oppressor and the oppressed must stand. O, my friends, I have no such message from God to you: happily, I am not commissioned to execute the vengeance of the Most High upon any; I have no weapons of destruction in my hand; I have the sword of the Spirit, and I pray God that it may be quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. Most anxious am I, that the arrows I may be enabled to draw from this quiver to-night, may be sharp in the heart of the king's enemies, for "I have a message from God unto you."

In looking round upon this vast assembly, I know not where to begin. I would distribute you into various classes, that there may be the greatest distinction and precision in my address. I will address you, then, according to your several ages, stations, states of mind, and the varieties of your character.

I shall address myself,

*First, To THE YOUNG:*

And it may be, my dear friends, that you start astonished that I begin with you. You fancy I should begin with the aged, who are just stepping into the grave; or, at least, with those who are more advanced in life; because you think, that as they are nearer death, religion is of more concern to them than to you. But how do you know they are nearer

death than you? Single out the oldest man in the congregation, and set him before me, count the number of his years, and I will venture to say, that some young person in this assembly may die before him, and that young person may be you. I call you not by name, it is not for me to do it; but if those books in which are written human destinies were opened to me, doubtless I might be able; but the uncertainty that rests upon it should warn you to serious thought; and the consideration that it may be you, should have all the effect of certainty in stirring up your minds to deep and intense consideration after the things that belong to your peace. For have you not seen many, young as you are, gay and vigorous as you are, bidding fair for life as you do, suddenly cut off by fell disease, and hurried prematurely, as men are wont to say, "to the house appointed for all the living?" But is not the season of youth, you ask, the season of hilarity and mirth? Is not this the period of festivity and enjoyment? And would you abridge the period of felicity, too short, alas! at best? Far be it from me to do this; I am not old myself. Far be it from me, my friends, to abridge you one solitary emotion that is worthy the name of pleasure, of one solitary pursuit that can yield you satisfaction and real enjoyment. But the pursuits and enjoyments of youth are not of this description; and it is concerning them that I have a message from God unto you. Will you listen, then, while I deliver it? "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring you into judgment." Now, it is as if while you are mustering your strong arguments, while you should indulge in this or that appetite, this or that passion, this or that scene of gayety and pleasure—it is as if in the midst of all, God were to address you and to say—Go, go to the scenes of gambling and of gayety—go to the ball-room, to the card-table, to the theatre—go frequent the tavern, the cock-pit, the horse-race—go

mingle with the thoughtless and the gay—go associate with whoremongers, and adulterers, and gamblers, and duellists, and sabbath-breakers, and blasphemers—go drink deep of the intoxicating bowl—imbibe their awful spirit, copy their hideous character, pursue their objects of attachment, till all the mildness, all the ingenuousness, all the simplicity, all the comparative innocence of youth is lost and absorbed in the art, and cunning, and intrigue, and desperate hardihood and callousness of vice. Go—but take this consideration with you as you go; let this ring in your ears in the midnight revel and the mazy dance—“For all these things God will bring you into judgment.” What! say you, will he bring me into judgment for this trifle? Will he censure me for this amusement? Will he condemn me for that innocent enjoyment? It is not for me to vindicate the Almighty in the presence of his creatures; I deliver his words; this is all I am bound to do: “For all these things God will bring you into judgment.” I leave conscience to be the interpreter; this is all your preacher has to do to-night; the rest shall be done by the silent preacher in your own bosom; and if, after having fixed your eye on that great white throne—if, after having these flaming records unfolded to your view—if, after having contemplated the dread assembly they gather round you—if, after having listened to the dreadful doom they thunder in your ears—if, after all, you will go—go—nothing can stay you but a miracle of grace—go, infatuated youth, bent on your own destruction—go, till you have attained a more determined hardihood, a more desperate callousness, than is usual at your tender age—go, and, if it were possible, I could weep over your delusion tears of blood!

I HAVE A MESSAGE FROM GOD UNTO YOU WHO ARE IN THE MERIDIAN OF LIFE.

You who are engaged in its active business—ye merchants, ye tradesmen, I have a message from God unto you. “Be anxiously careful for nothing; but in all things by prayer and supplications make your requests known unto God.” “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and

his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you.” “What shall it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” Now, I beseech you, ponder for a moment the important points of this message which the Almighty presents to your consideration. If you are absorbed in the cares and perplexities of life, and the deceitfulness of riches, how can the good seed grow and flourish in your heart? If you are principally concerned in accumulating the wealth and honours of the world, how can you expect the blessing of God? And if you should accumulate wealth to an unexampled degree, what will it avail you if you have obtained it at the expense of your eternal interests? O ye that sigh for wealth, that are eager to be rich, that pant after the mansions and the trappings of the great, think of him “who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and who fared sumptuously every day.” O! how must the answer of Abraham have agonized his bosom, when he requested that he would send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water to cool his tongue, tormented with the infernal flame! How must it have given teeth to the gnawing worm, and fury to the unquenchable fire! “Son,” said he, “remember that thou in thy lifetime receivest thy good things, and likewise also Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.” Think of that rich voluptuary, that wealthy idiot, that vaunting wretch, in the Scriptures, who made himself sure of life, because he had had success in trade; and, when he surveyed his barns and coffers filled with plenty, said to his soul, “Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;” but what was his consternation and horror, when suddenly a voice addressed him, “this night—this night thy soul shall be required of thee!” Look at the splendid banquet of the guilty Belshazzar—O how gay! how luxuriant! how they give the reins to their unhallowed revelry, and call for the sacred vessels that they may give a zest to their debauch! But ah! what is the cause of that awful silence?

Why do the knees of the monarch smite one against the other? Why is his eye so intently fixed upon yonder wall? There are the fingers of a man's hand writing his irrevocable doom, even in the midst of his gayety and splendour; and that night he sunk from his throne, never to rise again, till summoned to the tribunal of his insulted Maker.

Better have a life of toil and obscurity, of meanness, wretchedness, and poverty, with a title to heaven at the last, than enjoy the splendour, and wealth, and luxury of a court, and sink into hell. Ye men of business, you are upon the brink of an abyss, you are perpetually within a vortex that has drowned multitudes in perdition. O look up to him whose grace alone can deliver you, and make you diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

I HAVE A MESSAGE TO THE OLD AND GRAY-HEADED.

You have passed, perhaps, the boundary line of human existence, or you are drawing near to the expiration of your threescore years and ten. What is the answer of God to you? "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness." Is that honour yours? Then I venerate your hoary hairs, I respect your accumulated years; yours is the wisdom of experience, yours is the knowledge of God; and, doubtless, if you could unfold your history, it would be replete with lessons of instruction. God has led and guided you from your youth until now, and he is saying, "I will never leave you, I will never forsake you." "Though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will be with you, my rod and my staff shall strengthen you;" and you may say, "cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not now that my strength faileth me." But are you an aged sinner, a hoary-headed trifler, scoffing at eternity, with one foot in the grave? Alas! alas! I have a message from God unto you: "The Judge standeth at the door." "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me to render unto every man as his work shall be." The eleventh hour is past,

the twelfth is about to strike, and you are not ready for the coming of your Lord. What infatuation! The young know they *may* die soon, but you know you *must*, and still you are unconcerned; yet while your frame decays, your day of grace lingers: it is an accepted time still—your case is melancholy, but it is not desperate. The parable of the labourers in the vineyard, and the case of the dying thief, will not allow us to despair even of you. There is an arm that can snatch you from perdition, as the jaws of the gulf are closing upon you. But what a dreadful crisis have you reached! How do heaven and hell hang upon every moment of your fleeting time, and every breath you inhale! There is hope, but, perhaps, it will not be long; a few years at most, and, perhaps, but a few days, and you may be numbered with the redeemed or the damned. "Awake, then, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

But there are several stations into which I shall divide this congregation, and to whom I have a message from God.

I HAVE A MESSAGE FROM GOD UNTO THE RICH.

No man's station, however exalted, no man's wealth, however prodigious, can possibly exonerate him from receiving it. The monarch upon his throne—the judge upon the bench—the merchant upon the exchange, reject it at their peril. What, say you, no message of congratulation upon my success in trade, my increasing wealth, my extensive possessions? None. But I have a message of warning; "Charge those that are rich in this world, not to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God." It is a message of caution. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." It is a message of admonition. What says the wise man, "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?" Is not? say you. Have I not my wealth in my coffers, in my lands, in my splendid mansion and estates? Hear again his declaration, "Riches make to themselves wings, and flee away as an eagle

towards heaven." You perceive, then, you are not to make your riches your trust. There is nothing in which men are more disposed to pride themselves, than in their wealth. Full coffers and an empty head, splendid trappings and a ragged morality, outward magnificence and inward misery, are often found together; but if men properly considered wealth, instead of congratulating themselves upon the possession of it, they would look upon it with apprehension and dread. To whom is the gospel preached emphatically—to the rich? No—but to the poor. Who, for the most part, receive the gospel—the rich? No—but the poor. Of whom is it said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for them to enter the kingdom of God—the poor? No—but the rich. Was the Redeemer of mankind wealthy? No—poor. Are riches the proper soil for piety? No—but the most formidable obstruction to its growth. Do they tend to make us aspire after heaven? No—their tendency is to attach us to the earth; they endear every thing to the Christian which he ought to disregard. Has not God shown his contempt of riches by giving them to the meanest and the most despicable of the human race? who, then, that thinks as he ought, would wish to have this splendid encumbrance? Who would wish to surround himself, on his way to heaven, with these gaudy encumbrances, to have weights upon his garments, in a race so momentous, though consisting of gold?

#### I HAVE A MESSAGE TO THE POOR.

Are you poor and pious? Then yours is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, theirs are durable riches and righteousness." How many considerations are there, which should tend to reconcile you to your poverty! "The poor have the gospel preached unto them." The promises of Scripture are principally applicable to the poor. The messengers were directed to go forth into the lanes and alleys of the city, and to bring in the poor to the feast which the rich had despised. Christ committed the poor to the consideration of his church. "The poor ye have always

with you," said he, "but me ye have not always." By doing good to the poor of his flock, his people are regarded as doing good to him; "and a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose its reward." Consider, my friends, from how many temptations you are exempted by reason of your poverty; and remember, likewise, that the greatest good, for the most part, has been accomplished by the poor; and it has been so from the beginning. It was the poor wise man that saved the city. The Redeemer of the world was poor, "and had not where to lay his head." The first apostles and preachers of the gospel were poor. The great reformers from popery were chiefly poor. They had none of the attractions, none of the powerful influences of wealth. Our faithful ministers and missionaries are, for the most part, poor; and it is from the humblest walks of life that our Sunday-school teachers are supplied, who have proved so great a blessing to the world. Who, then, shall despise the poor? Who shall trample on the pious poor? He touches the apple of the Redeemer's eye, and tramples under his feet the Son of God.

There are also various states of mind which press upon my notice, and I have a message from God unto these.

ARE ANY OF YOU SKEPTICAL? I have a message from God unto you.

This is an age of abounding infidelity. The most daring and monstrous opinions are cherished and expressed with unhesitating lip, and unblushing countenance. This is an age of *free* inquiry, as it is called. The epithet *licentious* would be far more appropriate; for this freedom of inquiry is an abandonment of the oracles of God, for the oracles of Paine and Voltaire: and is there any one here who is disposed to follow the alluring and fascinating path of these pretended emancipators of the human mind? Are you sincere? Do you really wish to ascertain the truth? I have a message from God unto you. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God;" that is to say, if any man sincerely desire to ascertain

the mind of God in the Scriptures, that he may yield his spirit to the authority of God—that he may submit his life to the rule of his word—that he may obey all that it enjoins—that he may be all that it requires—that is the man who shall ascertain the truth, and be emancipated by its freedom. But it is not the man who comes to speculate—who comes to gratify an idle curiosity—who comes to idolize his reason—who comes with all the pride of his unsubdued nature—who comes cherishing the love of sin; that is not the man who shall know the truth; he comes not with a proper spirit; he insults the glorious Author of truth by the disposition he brings, and God will not honour such dispositions in its discovery. Be assured that infidelity has far more to do with men's hearts and lives than it has to do with their heads. There would be fewer infidels, fewer skeptics, if the Scriptures were more indulgent to the passions of the human heart; and I wonder not if men reject the gospel, whose pride is unsubdued; I wonder not that men should turn from the gospel, and say it is a fiction, that they are resolved to cherish their lusts, and sink or swim with the world. No! it cannot be. He that will embrace the gospel must take up his cross; must deny himself, if ever he would win Christ. He must bring all his reason to the authority of revelation. He must be contented that the dim taper of his intellect shall be absorbed in the mighty blaze of this meridian sun. He must turn from the world and embrace the Saviour, and be what he will have all his followers to be. But take care, I beseech you, lest in your fancied love of the truth—lest in your ardent desire for the emancipation of the human mind from the fetters of superstition—lest in your fondness for speculation, you press onward until your heart is cold and callous, and yours becomes the condition of those who shall follow strong delusions, that they may believe a lie, and so be damned because they have pleasure in unrighteousness.

IS YOUR MIND DEISTICAL?

You want more evidence to prove that this holy book is the word of God—you

are not certain that these oracles are divine, and what more evidence would you have? Do you want mathematical demonstration? It were madness to ask it upon a moral subject. The truth of the Scriptures is not to be established by lines and figures, as you may ascertain quantities and powers. What evidence do you want? Is it evidence of testimony? You have it; and, I venture to say, there is more evidence of the Scriptures than of any other history on the face of the earth. An evidence of all possible variety, that has undergone the test of the closest scrutiny, and has arisen with accumulated force from every effort that has been made to undermine it. What evidence do you want? Is it the evidence of prophecy? You have it. The Jews, at the present day, are a living and a mighty argument in proof of the truth of the Scriptures. They are exactly now, what, ages ago, the inspired oracles declared they should be. What evidence do you want? Is it the evidence of miracles? That evidence was given in the first ages of Christianity, in order to establish the divine authority of the Christian system, and, having accomplished it, it is done away; for if miracles had continued to the present hour, they would have ceased to operate in the way of miracles. The rising of the sun to-morrow morning will require as much the omnipotent power of God as the resurrection of a dead man from the tomb; but that ceases to be a miracle, because it has continued without interruption from the beginning of the world to the present hour; and, therefore, it has become one of the fixed laws of the material universe; and so, if miracles had continued till now, the long lapse of years would have confirmed them as the laws of the intellectual and material universe. What, then, do you require? Are you still so infatuated as to say, unless I see a miracle I will not believe. Let him raise a dead man to life, and I will give him credit. "I have a message from God unto you." "They have Moses and the prophets, they have Christ and his apostles, if they believe not them, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose

from the dead;" and I will prove that declaration true. Was not Lazarus raised from the dead in the presence of the Jews? Did they not see him pale and ghastly, and silent in the tomb? Did they not hear the voice of Jesus, at whose fiat he arose? Nay, did they not themselves assist in unbinding his grave-clothes? And yet these very men resisted the Saviour, denied his Messiahship, thirsted for his blood, and were not at rest till they exulted in his dying groans. "You know not what spirit you are of." There is sufficient evidence to justify the ways of God to men in your condemnation, if, after all this evidence, you reject him.

DO I SPEAK TO ANY WHO ARE DESPONDING AND PENITENTIAL?

What a sudden change! what a delightful contrast! I turn from the hardened and the impious to the penitent and the humble, from the proud and callous to the broken in spirit. You feel the burden of your guilt, you mourn over the aggravation of your crimes; you think your case, perhaps, even beyond the reach of the Saviour's love; but you are mistaken. You have not yet fathomed the depths of his grace, the length and breadth of his ability to save. You have not scaled the heights to which his mercy can reach. "I have a message from God unto you." "Come, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as wool; though red like crimson, they shall be as snow." "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." "My thoughts are not as your thoughts, neither are my ways as your ways, saith the Lord." "Wherefore he is able to save, even to the uttermost, all that come unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us." And now, blessed Jesus, gather this congregation; impart thy grace, that they may feel the meltings of thy love; woo and win them to thee, and may they be thine in that glorious day, when thou shalt come to be admired by thy saints, and glorified in all them that believe. My message is delivered; may I have to rejoice in its success, and your souls be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

## DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

At length, however, "when a convenient day was come that Herod on his birth-day made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee; and, when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee." It may be here observed, that public festivities are generally seasons of temptation; for, in those revels, if I may so speak, fire is added to gunpowder; and the dancing of a young female before so large an assembly, and before such a company, seems to have in it the very nature of an immodest act. But, however this may be, (for I know the world of fashion and sensuality will be ready to dispute the point with me,) I say, however this may be, she bewitched Herod, and caused him to exclaim, like a man who had lost his senses, "Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee;" and, as though this were not rashness and extravagance enough, "he swore unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom." "And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? and she said, The head of John the Baptist." You see here, that lust paves the way to murder; that it will prefer even so horrid a gratification as this to the half of a kingdom; and that the revenge it will inspire, even in a woman, will stick at nothing, however horrible. "And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by, in a charger, the head of John the Baptist." Prodigious! Give me in a charger!—such a dish as this to be added to the festivity! And shall a young damsel have the heart to bear such a request as this, and shall she go "with haste to deliver it to the king?" My dear hearers, you see here the curse of a wicked mother!—You here see the daughter who had first countenanced the adultery of her parent, now countenancing her in murder, and acting with her in the business. You see a hardness of heart, a cruelty of disposition, in this young

person, which, no doubt, shocked even Herod himself; for the history proceeds, "And the king was exceeding sorry; yet, for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her," not considering that rash and unlawful promises are far better broken than kept—not considering that he was a just and holy man, and that he had frequently heard him gladly, from a conviction of the truth of what he said. I say, Herod did not sufficiently call these things to mind, or is it possible he should not have recalled his order? The truth is, my brethren, you can have no hold of a man who is the victim of a criminal passion. Sin is a net which so entangles a man, that he cannot even help himself. A point of false honour has destroyed its thousands; not only in that day, but in every day; in our own day particularly. A victim of sin, a slave of the devil (to speak as plain as I can, where I ought to speak plain) is implicated in a quarrel about a dog or a harlot, and then a point of false honour is to be settled, and he is to be dragged into the field, to put his life and soul into jeopardy; he is to destroy himself, or his friend, in order to settle a point of false honour.

The passage before us strongly instructs us as to the nature and real character of those idols for which men are ready to sacrifice body, soul, and reputation.

I say, we are taught by this passage the real character and value of those idols for which men are ready to sacrifice body, soul, and reputation; and a prominent instance of this stands before us—one of the world's idols! The daughter of Herodias danced before Herod, with his high estates, and lords, and captains, and exceedingly pleased him; nay, quite infatuated Herod, or else what could have induced him to make such a promise, that he would give her even to the half of his kingdom! Because the damsel might be beautiful—accomplished—brilliant!—is the king to lose his reason, and to talk in this random manner! Now, learn from this to guard against the danger of the world's idols. If any thing catches your attention, if you fix your mind and heart upon it because you see it beautiful, ac-

complished, and brilliant, remember, so were Herodias and her daughter. But the question is, what were these idols in fact!—what were they in reality? Why, painted putrefactions; splendid sepulchres!

"Give me," (said this wicked young woman)—"I will give thee (says Herod,) to the half of my kingdom—ask!"—"Give me," (says she)—"What! more splendid apparel? a more magnificent palace?—a retinue more superb and imposing?—a better opportunity of distinguishing yourself as an accomplished young woman; a higher rank; a greater mark of my favour than you have yet received?"—"No; I want a dead man's head, swimming in blood!" Yes, thus she demanded; that her mother and she might, if they pleased, toss with their profane hands the head of that man who was sanctified from the birth; who was "a burning and a shining light," who was seeking their salvation; who was standing as the harbinger of the Sun of righteousness. "Let me and my mother have that man's head swimming in blood; that we may treat it with scorn, and show that we have got rid of our chief disturber." "What! are you not, as a damsel, as a young woman, shocked at such an idea; would you not shudder to look upon such a spectacle, as the head of John the Baptist swimming in blood, in a charger?" "Give me the head of John the Baptist in a charger!" As if she had said, "I will demonstrate to you that sin can rage in the fairest bosom! I will show you that hell can burn high under all these brilliant trappings and accomplishments!"

Ah! my dear hearers, if the spear of Ithuriel, as the poet describes it, could touch many of the distinguished and admired characters that the world looks up to and idolizes, what transformations would take place! what discoveries would be made! what horrors would be disclosed—instead of the charms which are now so much admired! How quickly would the enchantment be dissolved! Let us, then, learn, from the history before us, the real nature and character of those idols for which men sacrifice body, soul, and reputation.—*Cecil*.

## SERMON XXIV

CHARACTER UNALTERABLE AFTER DEATH.

BY THE REV. JOHN HAMBLETON, M.A.

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*“The time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”—Rev. xxii. 10. 12.*

WE saw, last Sunday morning, that there should be a general awakening of them that sleep in the dust of the earth, and we saw the portions for eternity to which they will awake—some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

What impression the solemn subject may have left on your minds I know not; I am anxious, however, that our Advent Sundays should not all slip past, without our having seriously considered the solemn things connected with the last glorious advent of our Lord; things, my brethren, in which we shall all find ourselves most deeply concerned. With God’s help, I will endeavour, therefore, that the fault shall not be mine, if that day, which the Scriptures so often and so emphatically speak of, as the day of all days the most awful, should find any of you unprepared.

I crave your attention and your prayers for you and me, while I proceed to open the subject presented in our text, by considering these two important points:

*First*, THE TIME IS APPROACHING WHEN MEN’S CHARACTERS WILL BE LEFT AS THEY ARE FOUND, WITH NO HOPE OR POSSIBILITY OF A CHANGE.

*Secondly*, THE SAVIOUR’S LAST COMING TO JUDGMENT WILL BE THAT SOLEMN TIME.

I. THE TIME IS APPROACHING WHEN MEN’S CHARACTERS WILL BE LEFT AS THEY ARE FOUND, WITH NO HOPE OR POSSIBILITY OF A CHANGE. Mark this, in the words

of inspiration, “The time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still.” There is one class of characters fixed, you perceive, and sealed for eternity. “And he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.” There is the other class, fixed and sealed in like manner.

This must refer to the decisions of the day of judgment, for it is then that the Saviour will reward every man according to his work, as the latter portion of our text declares; and it is plain also that the decision here spoken of is for eternity: for how can that be reversed which the Scripture hath affirmed? What hope is held out by God that the solemn sentence of the judgment day will ever be set aside? No: how could it be altered without violation and injury to the truth of God? If the sentence of everlasting punishment, when finally passed, could be reversed or mitigated, where were the truth of God?

But, brethren, I am not now to speak so much of the opposite portions of men in that day, as of their opposite character, henceforward never to be changed; and two classes of men are presented to our notice. How repeatedly Scripture intimates that two, and only two, large classes will then comprehend all mankind! Here, among men, we have learned, in some way or other, to divide

and subdivide many virtues and vices, and to take such partial views as to think a man good, virtuous, moral, because he shows a regard to one particular virtue, though, it may be, he disregards many others, and utterly despises that Christian holiness, which rises far above what moralists call *virtue*, and without which no man shall see the Lord. The Scripture, though it speaks of different Christian graces, yet it does not allow that a man is in a right or safe state, who cultivates one, but neglects another; and it evidently gathers men into two great classes, according to the quality of their actions, the motives of their conduct, the inward principle of their souls, and speaks of them accordingly as they are righteous or wicked, just or unjust, carnally minded or spiritually minded, godly or ungodly. Thus, in our own case, God doubtless could at this moment divide all who are here present into two classes as easily as a shepherd could divide the sheep from the goats.

In our text, each of these two classes is distinguished by two characteristic epithets. Let us think of them as they are here described, for it may aid us in discovering our true character. One class is divided into the wicked, and the other into the good. "For the time is at hand," when it will be said, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still."

The two epithets which characterize the unholy, are *unjust* and *filthy*. It would, perhaps, startle, and even offend the sinner, were I to say that every sinner is an unjust man; yet such I believe he is in the sight of a holy God. But I must explain that I use the word *unjust* in a larger sense than he has probably been accustomed to do. He may have understood by it, being unjust in worldly dealings; being dishonest and fraudulent; not paying honest debts; and there his conscience may not accuse him. It is well so far; I have no desire to lay to his charge sins of which he is not guilty. But supposing such a man—as he often boasts he can—pays every one his due, is this all the demand or the justice of God?—for it is that, my brethren, with which we shall have to do in

that day. Is this all that is meant by loving thy neighbour as thyself; by doing to others as thou wouldst they should do unto thee—by that new law given us by Christ, to love one another as he loved us? And supposing the sinner's conscience does not yet feel the charge as just in reference to God himself, let me ask, Is it not just that thou shouldst have honoured thy Maker? Has he not a right to thy obedience? Does he ask for more than is his right or due, when he says to each of us, "My son, my child, give me thine heart!" If God make a law, which is holy, just, and good, has he not a just right to expect that you and all his creatures should personally obey it? Is, then, that man a just man in the sight of God, who gives to God no honour, no service, no love, breaks every commandment of the first table of the law, and habitually disregards the gospel, hates, it may be, its very name, and then boasts and glories that he pays every one his due? Not every one: I must tell thee that thou exceptest at least one, and that is thy God; he does not get his rightful due.

Every person, therefore, who is living in the practice and love of sin, is unjust and unrighteous in the sight of God. How can he be otherwise? "This do, and live:" but he has forsaken, you see, the whole law. There is no commandment which he has fully, and spiritually, and habitually obeyed.

It is true, indeed, that there is another way in which we might be accounted and treated as just; but I must not speak of that yet. I am to describe, at present, the man who has hitherto despised that good method. He may have in notion a form, a fancy, an imagination of the plan of salvation, but he knows not the reality, or he would not still be an unjustified, unrenewed, unregenerated sinner. Unregenerated, indeed, he is; he has followed his corrupt nature; he has indulged his fallen propensities; he has never cared to seek for that grace which might have created him anew; and now, therefore, he is unjust, and, unless a mighty change take place, the time is at hand when it will be said of him, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still."

The other description given in the text of the sinner, is one that also will not please him; nor was it intended to do so. "He that is *filthy*"—many will dislike that word. Would that we were all as ready to quarrel with sin as we are to quarrel with its scriptural name! But the Scripture is too faithful to flatter us. It pronounces sin to be a filthy thing before God. Does not the same word occur in the book of Job, the 15th chapter? "What is man that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight. How much more abominable and *filthy* is man, which drinketh iniquity like water!" Thus also the psalmist, in the 14th psalm, says, "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become *filthy*"—the same word describing the same fact. Isaiah declares that "all our righteousnesses are as *filthy* rags." The apostle Paul applies this word, in the epistle to the Colossians, to language—"Let no *filthy* communication proceed out of your mouth." In his epistle to Timothy, he applies it to the love of sordid gain—"not greedy of *filthy* lucre." This expression occurs, in fact, in several other places. Thus, Lot in Sodom was vexed with the *filthy* conversation of the wicked. And again, St. Paul says, "Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all *filthiness* of the flesh and spirit." Here are, brethren, Scripture proofs enough, if proofs you want, that sin is an abominable and defiling thing. A corrupt thought in you God accounts guilt; a depraved imagination is odious in his eyes; an impure desire is a violation of the spirit of his law. And now, sinner, still unrenewed in heart, what thinkest thou of this? How many corrupt thoughts, depraved imaginations, and impure desires, has the soul-piercing eye of God seen in thee! How many filthy words have escaped thy lips! Those obscene jests, those wanton songs, those idle speeches thou

hast uttered against holy things, all are loathsome, and depraved, and offensive unto God. But it is also true, that thou mightest have had all this forgiven thee; that the blood of Jesus Christ would have cleansed thee from all; that the Spirit of Jesus Christ would have made thee a new creature. But, when hast thou gone to Christ? When hast thou prayed for the Spirit? Thou hast rather been contented in thy filthiness, and wished to continue in sin, and there thou art up to this moment an unchanged, unpardoned, unjust, and filthy sinner.

But now I will tell thee of a time when this will be fixed as thy character for ever, beyond all hope or possibility of change. The time is at hand at which it will be said, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: he that is filthy, let him be filthy still." There is something very solemn even in the form of this expression: the word *still*, at the end of each clause, repeated four times in the verse. That word seems to sound as the death-knell to the hope of the ungodly. Those who die unjust and filthy, will rise unjust and filthy still. There is no repentance in the grave, whither we are going. There is nothing in the mere act of dissolution, which can change the essential character of the soul. There is nothing in the society of lost spirits, in the other world, which can purify an evil heart. There is none but God who can change the heart, forgive sins, and cleanse and purify the soul; and God himself offers to do it only in *one* way—through the merits of Christ, and the gracious operations of his Holy Spirit. But he makes no promise to do it for any, after this life, in any way whatever; on the contrary, he plainly declares, that as you will die, so you will rise; as the tree falls, so it must lie. A seal, then, is to be put, if I may so speak, upon every man as he leaves the world. If he leave it unjust and filthy, judgment is sealed upon such a character, with all its accompanying punishment, never to be removed throughout eternity. The thought is absolutely overwhelming. It is easy to form sinful habits; to shake them off at last may prove utterly impossible. It

is easy for you to laugh at purity, temperance, virtue, holiness, and piety; but know that unless you use aright the space now given you for repentance, you shall gnash the teeth in bitter agony, wailing, and remorse. "Be not deceived: God is not to be mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." God is a God of justice; and, if you serve sin, justice must see that you are paid your wages; and "the wages of sin is death." If you choose to be unjust and filthy now, when you have all the motives of the gospel—motives bedewed with the tears, and steeped in the blood, and bathed in the dying agonies of Christ: if, with these feelings in your heart, you yet choose to be unjust and filthy, will it not be perfect justice in God, having warned you so long before, to say to you in that day, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: he that is filthy, let him be filthy still?"

O, this surely gives us an awful idea of hell! The character unchanged—man still unjust—with the desire of sin remaining—the poor paltry pleasure gone—the enjoyment past—the punishment abiding—the mutual encouragement ceased—mutual reproaches continuing; and all this for eternity! God preserve us from that awful state!

It is time to turn to the brighter side. We turn from what we told you sounded like the death-knell of hope, of joy, to the ungodly. Listen, now, and you will hear what shall resemble the death-knell of sorrow, temptation, and conflict to all the faithful in that day: "And he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still."

And who is righteous? Is it not written, "There is none righteous, no not one?" Yes; but is it not also written, "By the obedience of one man shall many be made righteous?" Properly and strictly speaking, Jesus Christ is the only righteous man who has ever lived. Others may be called righteous in an inferior sense; or, when compared with other men, they may appear righteous. Thus Enoch, Noah, Daniel, and others, in this secondary sense, were virtuous men; but Christ alone is righteous, in the full and

proper sense of the term. He fulfilled all righteousness—he loved God supremely, perfectly, unceasingly. He was without spot or taint of sin, original or actual; and, to crown all, his death was a sacrifice for sin—an atonement to justice. In him the sentence against sinners is removed, their guilt freely forgiven, and the righteousness of Christ is imputed to them, and made available for their justification; and thus, in St. Paul's words, which I will repeat, "Through the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." This act of justification takes place now. Whenever any, truly penitent and humble, put the trust of their souls in the meritorious righteousness and death of Jesus Christ, they are completely forgiven: "Being justified by faith, they have peace with God;" and when that day comes—that great and glorious day—then their justification shall be openly confirmed. "He that is righteous, let him be righteous still." "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."

But we must also remain *holy*. By nature we are unholy, filthy, vile; but the Holy Spirit, given for the Saviour's sake, creates men anew unto holiness, brings them to hate sin—to seek for a new heart—to mortify lust—to separate from the world, which still lieth in wickedness, and to follow after holiness. This, you will observe, is not the same with the being made righteous before spoken of. That was through the righteousness of Christ—through his work done for the soul: in that respect we are to be complete *in him*. But this being made holy is through the grace of the Holy Spirit working in you mightily—humbling, enlightening, convincing, guiding, animating, sustaining. In this respect we are to strive—to pray—to watch—fight, wrestle against sin. We are to grow in grace—to ripen in knowledge—to wax stronger and stronger—to become more zealous, active, devoted, charitable, kind—more like the new Adam, and less like the old Adam.

Now, I hope you understand who is righteous and who is holy. One and the same man is meant—whom Christ justi-

fies, the Spirit also sanctifies. There must be no difference betwixt righteousness and holiness: "What God hath joined, let not man put asunder." Whoever thinks himself justified through Christ, and yet despises holiness, is not justified and righteous: whoever thinks much of holiness, but depends not on Christ, and on him alone, for justification, has to begin afresh—he must become a little child, and sit down at the feet of Jesus to be taught of him.

My brethren, whoever mistakes me now, and from a perverse mind will not make out those vital points which I have laboured much and often—God is my witness, and your consciences are my witnesses—to set before you, with all plainness of speech; in that day there will be no room for doubting or mistake. "He that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." Sweet words these, and full of comfort. They show you, you that desire to be faithful, that the character which God is now forming in you by his gospel is meant to last for ever. No wonder that the influences of the law and the Spirit in your heart are so deep. No wonder that the touches of the divine artist, in tracing his own image on your souls, are so delicate and so fine. No wonder that he sends you sermon after sermon, prayers, Scriptures, warnings, exhortations, chastenings. All is here explained. The righteous and holy character to which God is training you, through Christ, is meant to be your character for eternity—your passport for heaven, through Christ, who is the door—your preparation for the pure and holy pleasures of heaven!

If a child be expected, in the course of years, to come to a throne, what care, what labour, what expense are employed to form him into a character which may become his station! You, my brethren, if Christians indeed, are to inhabit the palaces of heaven, to be heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. Is it not right, therefore, that you should now be trained and educated to that righteous, holy, spiritual, sanctified character, in which alone you can be happy in heaven?

But, then, in that day your state shall be confirmed. There may afterwards be improvement and expansion, but there can be no change in the essential character of the soul. Will you not forsake every evil way? Do you mean to draw back unto perdition? Will it not be reward enough for toil, effort, patience, and exercise of faith in Christ, if, in that day, we may hear Christ say of us, "He that is righteous, let him be righteous still?" The word *still*, will then be solemn indeed; for it will be spoken just afterwards to the ungodly. It will bring heaven or hell—ecstasy or anguish—what you might have been, if left to yourselves, with what you are, through grace, into such near contrast, that I suspect you will be so overwhelmed with gratitude, that you will fall at the feet of Christ, and say, "Not unto us, O Lord; not unto us, but unto thy name be all the praise." But,

#### II. WHEN AND HOW SHALL THIS BE?

"Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

"Behold, I come quickly." How often the Scripture calls men to behold! "Behold, he cometh, and every eye shall see him." How little do multitudes behold him! That day will take numbers by surprise. Brethren, if we all beheld it aright, made it a matter of serious meditation, we should be other Christians than we too often are. Behold, he cometh quickly: but who are we to behold? "I come"—I, the Saviour, the Redeemer—I, the prophet, priest, and king—I, the righteous judge, the one rejected, the persecuted man of sorrows, the offended Son of God! "I come"—sinners, tremble; believers, rejoice! "I come"—infidel, behold him whom you have dared to deny; believers, behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world! "I come"—whose coming has been so long promised, and so long and earnestly expected! "I come quickly"—yes, my brethren, *quickly*. Ask of time whither it flies so fast—what means its haste? It will answer, "I am speeding forward that day—I am coming to meet my Lord—I hasten forward to eter-

nity." "I come quickly," says Jesus. Ask of death, why he is so rapidly, on the right hand and on the left, mowing down men like grass—sweeping away generation after generation—making hardly any distinction between young and old, rich and poor, prepared and unprepared, just and unjust, the filthy and the holy? Death will tell you, "Christ is coming, and then my work shall cease—my commission will terminate—my time is shortening—I cannot tell more of my business—I must return to my work of destruction."

My brethren, infidels still ask, "Where is the promise of his coming?" Here, in our text, is the promise, "Behold, I come quickly." The Scripture declares it, and all things show it. Even though a thousand years should first intervene, they are but as one day. Christ will be here quickly; much before some are prepared for his coming. If any would here ask me to tell them more minutely when it will be, to let them know the day, the hour of his coming, to describe the manner, I return to such the solemn warning of Christ, "Behold, I come *quickly*"—that ought to be enough. Are you prepared for his coming, or are you not? If you are, go and serve him, praise him, glorify him, do all you can for him. "Happy is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing." If some of you are not prepared, O get ready instantly, for he will be here quickly!

My brethren, do not speculate and busy yourselves with curious questions on this point. Our duty here is as simple and plain as it can be. We are servants left in charge to get ready for our Lord, who has sent us word that he is soon about to come. If, instead of setting ourselves every one to his work, we should gather in groups around the fire to discuss such questions as these, "When do you think he will come? Which way, by the east, or by the west? In what chariot? In what dress? With what attendants?" Though we should never settle all these questions, we should dispute over them till we became angry with each other; and if we were, the house is not ready—the work is not done—the uppermost room is not yet furnished—the chambers

of imagery are not yet cleansed—the whole house is vanity. In the midst of all this, hear a sound; a charlot approaches, a trumpet sounds, in the twinkling of an eye he is here, and we are not ready! We have not acted like those of his servants who hear him say, "Behold, I come. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. My reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." When he passes sentence on the unholy, it is the reward which Christ gives them for rejecting him; for continuing in sin, and serving Satan. But to the faithful it is also Christ's reward; for Christ bled for them on the cross; he paid the penalty, offered the sacrifice, endured the death, fulfilled all righteousness. It is his; for he gives it freely of his grace. And this reward will then be to every man *according as his work shall be*. If his work, when tried by Christ, who knows the heart, shall be found a work of faith, a work of true penitence, a work of genuine goodness, a work of grace, there shall be a rich reward, not for our sake—for our best works would condemn us—but for Christ's sake, in whose name and for whose sake it was wrought. But if your work prove bad, unjust, filthy; if, when Christ appeals to the searching test, there appear sensuality, formality, self-righteousness, according to your work must be your sentence and portion for eternity.

My brethren, now, therefore, choose what shall be your portion in that day. Life and death are set before you. Try your own work by the standard of God's truth. Ask God for his Holy Spirit to keep you from self-deception. There are, I repeat it, but two great classes among you: either you are justified, or you are not justified; either you are filthy, or you are holy, in the sight of God. If you are in an ungodly state, *now* turn to God; *now* believe on Christ; *now* pray for his Spirit; *now* begin in right earnest. If you delay and hesitate, and again give yourselves up to sinning, God may give

you up. "Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone." But it is not so yet! Those fears, those alarms, those resolutions, those ejaculations of heart are a token for good. Be ready against Christ comes. And, to believers, let me say, Trim your lamps, and hasten, brethren, to meet your Lord. Look for, and depend on his coming; set your house in order; get every spot of filth washed away in the Saviour's blood! Prepare the heart—seek to have the soul completely sanctified—be ye also ready—the Lord is at hand!

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REDEMPTION.

THE redemption which Christ has effected has regard to *the power of Satan*. It is scarcely possible to conceive of a more affecting description than that which the apostle has given us when speaking of his fellow men. He tells us they are led captive by the devil at his will. This evil spirit works and rules in the children of disobedience. He purposes to keep his wretched vassals in chains of darkness—the blackness of darkness for ever. Satan is the strong man armed, who keeps his palace and his goods in peace; but the Redeemer, who is stronger than he, comes with delivering grace, seizes the strong man armed, binds him in fetters which he cannot break, secures the prey from the mighty one, and sets the lawful captive at liberty. What a triumph did the Son of God achieve, when he bowed his anointed head upon the cross, and cried, with a loud voice, "IT IS FINISHED!" He then not only blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, nailing it to his cross, but he also "triumphed over principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly." When he ascended up on high, "He led captivity captive." He dragged at the wheels of his triumphal chariot the monstrous powers that had enslaved and destroyed the world; and, when he had thus ascended in holy triumph, "He received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell amongst them." By the power which he received after the accomplishment of our redemption, he has

delivered, he does deliver, and he will still continue to deliver, his ransomed people, until the last enemy is swallowed up in victory, and the banners of the Redeemer are waved in triumph over every hostile foe.

Further, the resurrection of Christ has regard to *the power of death*. Death is the penalty of sin. Death receives his authority from the hands of divine justice. Death inflicts the stroke of punishment on a guilty world. How resistless his power! How vast his dominion! But view the work of our Redeemer in connexion with the king of terrors. "Verily, he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham;" the nature of man: "That, through death he might destroy him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Long before the days of his incarnation, he is introduced, in ancient prophecy, as saying, "O, grave, I will be thy plague! O, death, I will be thy destruction! I will ransom them from the power of the grave—I will redeem them from death." He met the stern monster in his own dark dominions, and tremendous was the contest. "Sorrowful even unto death," his "sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground;" and he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The great Redeemer felt the severity of the stroke. He bowed down for a season under the weight of his power; but he did not see corruption; and the third, the appointed day, he rose as a triumphant conqueror. But, mark! in passing through the dominion of death, he destroyed his dominion; he extracted his sting—he dispersed the gloomy horrors of the tomb—he threw wide open the gates of life, and glory, and immortality, and laid a firm foundation for that glorious triumph which countless myriads will enjoy at the last day, when they will universally exclaim, "Lo! this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him—we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation."

Redemption has respect to *the wrath*

*which is to come*—the wrath which is yet to be revealed. The divine displeasure is the most awful subject that the mind of man can contemplate: it is expressed in Scripture by all that is terrible. It is still *wrath which is to come*. After all the terrors of the law and the agonies of conscience; after all the outpouring of its fires upon the guilty nations in time, and its awful manifestations in the day of judgment; after untold myriads of ages have passed in the vengeance of eternal fire, it is still *wrath which is to come*. Now, the redemption proclaimed in the gospel extends the whole interminable length of this manifestation of the divine displeasure. To this great deliverance the eye of the church of God in all ages has been directed. Every believer, under the gospel dispensation especially, is waiting for the Son of God from heaven; “even Jesus, (as the apostle says,) who is to deliver us from the wrath that is to come.” And how glorious will be the deliverance! The divine Redeemer will triumph over a benighted world—the multitude will be innumerable—the praises boundless—the glory will fill all eternity, and shine through all eternity.

Once more: The redemption of Christ has respect to *the forfeiture and the recovery of the heavenly inheritance*. By man came death—by man came also the resurrection of the dead. “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; but they who receive abundance of grace, and the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ.” “When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son—made of a woman, made under the law—to redeem them that were under (condemned by) the law, that they might receive the adoption of children, and if children, then heirs—(heirs of the promise, heirs of salvation, heirs of life everlasting)—heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” The second Adam came to repair the ruins of the first. The first Adam, by sin, lost the earthly paradise; the second Adam, by his obedience, restores it to a heavenly paradise. Hence, the beautiful imagery employed by prophets in describing the millennial reign of our Redeemer, and the glories of the

celestial state, is borrowed from the scenery of the earthly paradise. Thus we read of the *rivers* of paradise, of the *flowers* of paradise—the *tree* of life that grew in the midst of paradise—of the *purity, innocence, and blessedness* of the paradisaical state. But there is this difference; there is no curse in the heavenly paradise—no tree of death—no lurking serpent to beguile, deceive, and ruin; but the throne of God and the Lamb is there, and he that sitteth on the throne dwelleth among them, and is their God; and they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; but the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and the soft hand of God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Let us, then, my brethren, take our harps down from the willows, and with Peter, himself a stranger in the earth, let us sing the Lord’s song in a strange land: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.” Yes, paradise has been lost, but paradise has been regained; and redemption is proclaimed, as it respects the restoration of the forfeited inheritance.

I would earnestly entreat those who are in a state of alienation from God seriously to consider their present condition.

Are you not under the condemning sentence of God’s law, and unable to satisfy its divine demands? Are you not under the arrest of divine justice, which cannot be relinquished, but which will be satisfied in inflicting punishment upon you? Are you not tied and bound by the chain of your lusts and passions? Are you not exposed to the anguish of death, and the wrath which is to come? Without a Redeemer, without a deliverer, must not everlasting destruction be your inevitable doom? O that this consideration may lead you to a timely reflection!—*Thorpe*

## SERMON XXV.

GOD THE BESTOWER OF ALL GOOD GIFTS.

BY THE REV. H. STOWELL, A.M.

ST. MARY'S CHURCH, ISLINGTON.\*

*"But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee."*—1 Chron. xxix. 14.

THE scene which these words introduce to our notice, is one of the most affecting and interesting that can well occupy our attention. They lead our thoughts to that venerable monarch of Israel, the son of Jesse, the sweet singer of Zion, now grown gray in the service of God; yet in his breast the fire of zeal for his divine Master burns brighter and clearer amidst the visitations of judgment. Though himself disallowed by God, because his hands were stained with blood, from building the temple for the Lord of hosts; yet his heart longed at least to have some share in raising the blessed structure; and seeing he could not himself be allowed to erect it, he would provide, ere he left this world, materials for its erection. He himself offered with all his might willingly to the Lord, to an extent and an amount which is perfectly astonishing; and then asked, "Who then is willing" (addressing the rulers and the hundreds of Israel)—"Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" In answer to the monarch's prayer, God was pleased to pour down so abundantly the spirit of love and liberality on the assembled multitude, that they gathered together a mighty store of gold, and silver, and brass, and iron, and precious stones. It would appear that at the time the words

I have read to you were uttered, the monarch stood surrounded with his people, and before him the mighty accumulation of their free-will offerings: and then it was that his aged heart leaped within him for joy, and he took up the beautiful words that are before us, breaking forth in simple ascription of all the praise, and all the glory, to Him to whom alone they belong: and he said, "Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel, our Father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heavens, and in the earth, is thine: thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now, therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee."

These interesting words, my Christian hearers, so appropriate to the object that bespeaks our special regard this morning, will lead me, in the *first* place, to observe, THAT THE DISPOSITION AND THE ABILITY TO GIVE TO GOD ARE ALIKE FROM HIMSELF: in the *next* place, THAT THE DISPOSITION TO GIVE CALLS FOR PROFOUND GRATITUDE

\* On Behalf of the Free Church, erecting in the parish.

THAN EVEN THE ABILITY TO GIVE : and in the *last* place, THAT THE ABILITY AND THE DISPOSITION TO GIVE TO GOD ARE NEVER MORE NOBLY EXERTED THAN WHEN EXERTED IN ERECTING TEMPLES TO THE GLORY OF HIS NAME. May his heavenly Spirit give efficacy to his own living word!

THE ABILITY AND THE DISPOSITION TO GIVE TO GOD COME ALIKE FROM HIMSELF.

That our *ability* to give to God comes from himself, might seem a position too obvious to need illustration : but however we may admit it in theory, we are continually tempted to deny it in fact ; and if we examine our own breasts, we shall find that we are continually prone to this act of ungodliness, this atheistical act of assuming to ourselves, appropriating to ourselves, and ascribing to ourselves, what simply and solely belongs to Almighty God. If we admit the position that we came from him ; that he made us, and not we ourselves ; that we are his creatures ; that he formed us by his power, and fashioned us by his wisdom ; that our body is curiously and wonderfully wrought by his workmanship ; and that our minds and all its mysterious faculties are his inspiration ; then that simple position necessarily involves our complete dependence on the bounty of the Creator. For what have we in the powers of our body, or in the faculties of our mind, that have not come from God ? And if they came from God, then to God they belong : no tie can be more indefeasible, no tie can be more perpetual, than the tie that attaches the creature to the Creator ; which will last as long as the Creator lasts, and which never will cease to exist : therefore, my brethren, we are the Lord's, whether we believe it or deny it.

But the *ability* to give comes still more from him, when we remember that he has not given (if indeed he could give) to us, or any other creature, independent existence. There can be but one independent being, as there can be but one uncaused being : and that one being must be the cause of all other beings : and that independent being must be the sustentation of all the beings he creates.

So that, as truly as that we derived our existence from God, so truly we continue our existence in God. In him we live, and move, and have our being. We cannot lift an arm, or draw a breath, or tell a pulse, or think a thought but as we are enabled, actuated, maintained in the use of our powers, and in our existence, by the same omnipotence that called us out of nothing.

Would you have this truth more simply illustrated ? I might take you in fancy to that melancholy asylum for ruined minds within no great distance from this house of prayer ; I might take you through its desolate and gloomy cells ; I might point you to minds in ruins, that were once more vigorous, perhaps, more clear, and more in all their activity, than yours at the present moment. Why are those minds demolished, while yours continue in their vigour and healthfulness ? Who hath made you to differ ? I could take you to the graves around the walls of this house of prayer : I might point out to you many who might have been now as strong and as active as you ; but their spirits have returned to God who gave them : the head to think, and the hand to act, and the heart to prompt, are cold in the dust. Who hath made you to differ ? I could take you into huts and into cellars : I could show you individuals who were once as wealthy as the wealthiest of you, clothed in splendour, and faring sumptuously every day ; who now are clothed with rags, and are reduced to such abject distress, that they have not bread or water with which to satisfy the cravings of nature. Who hath made you to differ ? I could point you out many who have been as diligent in business, as skilful in their speculations—who have formed their purposes as ardently, and carried them out into execution with as much energy, as ever you have ; and yet their energies have been employed in vain ; their plans have been frustrated, and disappointment has met them at the end of every path. Who hath made you to differ ? I could lead you to others who, from some sudden revolution which no eye could foresee, have been reduced to the greatest de-

spondency and the greatest disappointment. Who hath made you to differ?

Beloved brethren, we are all of us stewards; and it is required in a steward that a man be found faithful: and whether we have two talents, or whether we have ten; whether we are rich men, and have much to give—or whether we are poor men, and can only give the widow's mite to the treasury of the sanctuary; we are equally dependent upon Him. We have received all from him: "for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." What beautiful condescension in the Mighty God is it that he should first put the gift in the hands of his creatures, and then invite them to give the gift back to him, receiving it as if it were their own!

If, then, beloved brethren, the ability to give is from the Lord, of whom are all things, I would further show you that the disposition to give to God of what he has given to us, is more, if possible, from him. Man, when he came from the hand of his Maker, was made in his image, and was therefore full of love—for "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." But man, as a fallen creature, has lost that image, and therefore, instead of being full of God, is full of selfishness. Self has taken the place of God in his breast: all his object and all his aim is to aggrandize, to exalt, to gratify, to pamper self. Could we dissect the actions that appear good and noble in the eyes of men—could we dissect the motives and see the principles from which they spring; we should be ready to lament where they admire, and to weep where they rejoice. Beloved brethren, man is naturally so selfish, that however, from the promptings of natural pity, he may sometimes give, and however he may at other times, by a mere regard to character, or the applause or the censure of his fellow worms, give bountifully and largely; yet of this you may be assured, that no man can give to God, give out of love to God, with a single eye to his honour, with a simple wish of his acceptance of the gift, but God has given him that disposition, renewed him in the spirit of that mind in

which hitherto selfishness has ruled alone, and kindled the fire of heaven where there burnt the fire of hell. Never can man give to God, till God has given him a heart that is filled with the only principle that can make any of his gifts or offerings acceptable to his Father in heaven. He will never forego his requirement—"My son, give me thy heart:" and give him what we will—our talents, our time, our efforts, our comforts, our lives themselves—yet, if the heart be kept, all is a vain boasting: God looks on the whole with abhorrence, indignation, and contempt; and still he says, "My son, give me thine heart." But if the heart be given, whatever follows, that gift through Jesus Christ shall be accepted with the Father: and the cup of cold water, given from the bidding of a heart that has already been given to God, shall in nowise lose its reward; it has a value stamped on it all its own, because it is given from a disposition that is bestowed by the Spirit of God.

Beloved brethrer, let a man only try by his own unaided efforts, will, and affections, to do one disinterested act; and he will find that he might sooner quicken the dead, that he might sooner arrest the waves of the sea, than by any power or resolution of his own do one disinterested act out of love to God. How can he do it? "Make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt." Out of a renewed heart renewed actions will spring; out of an unrenewed heart nothing but a polluted spring of iniquity can flow. Beloved brethren, it is therefore a position alike that commends itself to Scripture and to reason, that the ability and the disposition to give to God must alike come from himself.

I am led, in the next place, from the words of the Psalmist, to show you, that WE OUGHT TO BE MORE PROFOUNDLY THANKFUL FOR THE POSSESSION OF THE DISPOSITION, THAN OF THE ABILITY, TO GIVE.

You will perceive by a reference to the passage, that the emphasis of the psalmist's gratitude is laid upon the *willingness*, rather than the *ability*; for it is

said, "the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy:" and his language was—"Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort?" You will perceive, brethren, that the whole stress of his gratitude is laid upon the *willingness* that the Lord had given them to give to him that had given to them all. O brethren, it was not the mighty accumulation of treasure; it was not so much the amount of the gold, the silver, and the precious stones, that filled the heart of the monarch with such ecstasy: it was the readiness and the cheerfulness with which the people gave. They felt it to be a privilege; they considered it their highest honour to give thus to the Lord God of Israel.

Beloved brethren, by a very few and simple arguments, it may be made apparent to you, that the gift of the disposition from God, far transcends the ability without the disposition. For the ability to give is granted to multitudes that are enemies to God, and rebels in their minds, and who will perish everlastingly. We know, alas! that God often "fillethe the belly of the ungodly with his hidden treasure;" that they leave their substance to their children; that they build their houses, and call them by their names, so that they should endure for ever; and yet they go down to the grave, to the narrow tomb, and the shroud and the coffin are all their wealth can procure them, and beyond this world the wealth of the world would not procure one drop of water to cool their tongue, parched in that flame. O brethren, think little of wealth in itself—honour in itself—human applause in itself—distinction in this world in itself; all are but phantoms and shadows, except as they are consecrated to God. *Then*, indeed, they may subserve his glory, our own happiness, and our own reward hereafter. But if we make them objects of themselves; if we use them as though they were our own; if we are unfaithful stewards; if we are using in ourselves what God gave us in order that we might set forth his glory, and set forward

the salvation of our fellow men; then our gold is cankered, and our garments are moth-eaten; the rust of our treasures will eat up our whole heart as with tire; and we shall wish, amid the torments of the lost, that we had been born with Lazarus on the dunghill, rather than found with the rich man in the mansion. Waste of wealth, of knowledge, and of talent, does but enhance our guilt, and, therefore, deepen our ruin. Well would it have been for many of the rich and the great that they had had to beg their bread from door to door, rather than had the rich gifts of God's bounty to render their future account the more dark and the more tremendous.

Brethren, it is not so with the disposition to give which comes from God. God gives this only to his people. Many of them are poor; like Lazarus, fed with the crumbs that falls from the rich man's table; but they are rich—rich in the love of God—rich in the hope of heaven—rich in the heart that is filled so largely with benevolence that it can grasp the world in its embrace; rich, therefore, for having nothing, they possess all things. The disposition to give is God's precious talent put into the souls of his own children. They are like him, because they are born of him. He puts not off his heritage with the poor perishing wealth of this world: he would make them think little of these things compared with the unsearchable riches of Christ. And, brethren, one grain of genuine love to man, springing from love to God, its only source, is worth all the wealth of Peru: and if we had the whole world without that, we are poor in our riches, and desolate in the midst of our glory: for "what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" And the soul that hath not love to God, springing forth in love to man, is dead while he lives; and going into eternity thus dead, his death must be eternal.

Further, brethren, the disposition to give to God calls for livelier gratitude, inasmuch as the ability without the disposition can never make a man happy; but the disposition without the ability fills the man's breast with what riches

can never purchase. Many of the sons of wealth and grandeur have, amidst their splendour, a wicked heart, a resisting conscience, and a mind which, like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, casts up mire and dirt. O what false estimates do we sometimes make of happiness! The mind is the seat and centre of a man's misery or of a man's enjoyment: such as the heart is, so is the man's belief. The man who has all the wealth of the world, but has not a heart to use it for God, must be feeding on ashes: a lying and deceiving heart hath turned him aside; he is sowing to the wind, and shall reap the whirlwind; he is following a shadow, and grasping a phantom; he is sowing to the flesh, and of the flesh shall reap corruption. But a heart that is rich in love to God, and rich in love to man, however poor the circumstances of the individual, has in it a well of water springing up into everlasting life; is filled with a joy with which the stranger intermeddled not—with a peace which passeth all understanding—a hope that maketh not ashamed. It has in that blessed disposition a source of joy which thousands of rich men, if they but knew its preciousness, would buy with all their substance; and gladly would kings give up their crowns and their sceptres, could they but taste for one hour the joy that springs from disinterested love. He is the happy man who can realize from his own experience the sublime sentiment of our Lord when in human form below: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." If we know not that blessed truth, we are strangers to real happiness; if we have never tasted that fountain of living water that maketh glad the city of our God.

The *disposition to give*, unaccompanied with the *ability*, is received of God according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not. Though we give all our goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth us nothing: if our hearts be inspired with heavenly charity, then, though we give but a crust of bread, or the widow's mite, God accepts it; and it is more in proportion to a poor individual than the gifts of the greatest sovereign on earth. God is

a just God; he does not reap where he has not sown, nor gather where he has not strewed; but accounts him that is faithful in little as faithful also in much. He will not condemn a man because he has not two talents; if he is condemned, it will be because the one talent was hidden in a napkin instead of being laid out for the glory of God. The poor man's crown will be as bright as the rich man's; for it is according to the faithfulness, and not according to the ability, that we shall be judged at the last day. Are there not many of the poor, rich in faith, rich in liberality, rich in love? And if they are ever tempted to envy their richer neighbours, it is on such occasions as these, when their hands can so ill obey the promptings of their hearts, and when they would give largely into the treasury of the house of God. If there is one object more than another that calls for profoundest pity, it is not the poor man who has the heart, but not the hand to give; but it is the rich man, who has the hand to give, but not the heart. He is the poor man—poor in the eyes of angels, poor in the eyes of God, poor for eternity.

Further: The disposition to give calls for profounder gratitude than the ability to give, inasmuch as the disposition to give brings us likeliest to that blessed Redeemer, who was not, when on earth, a man of wealth and grandeur; who came not in the splendour of the monarch, with thousands of attending legions; but was himself "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," not having where to lay his head, and being dependent on the charity of others; so that from the hand of charity, the Lord of the universe received the pittance of his daily support. Does not this tell us that it is not the *ability to give* that marks a man as the favourite of heaven, but rather the *disposition to give*. For what was he giving? Giving the glories of heaven—giving the homage of angels—giving his own heart's blood, to save sinners. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich." And when was this

mind in us that was in Christ Jesus? When have we counted all things but dung and dross, that we might glorify our Father, and render to him what he has lent to us?

I am, in the *last* place, to show you, that THE ABILITY AND THE DISPOSITION TO GIVE ARE NEVER MORE NOBLY EMPLOYED THAN IN ERECTING TEMPLES FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD.

Charity, to be fully efficient, must be wisely regulated; and the charity that does not proportion its gifts to the urgency of the claims upon it, is wanting in that wisdom which is from above. Let prudence ever guide the hands of your charity, to give to objects in proportion to their momentousness and their magnitude. There are objects of a temporal nature momentous and deeply affecting. To build alms-houses for the aged and the destitute; to rear asylums for the insane; to support dispensaries for affording medicine for the sick; to erect infirmaries for the reception of the wounded and the maimed; to deal out our bread to the hungry, our water to the thirsty, our garments to the naked: these are exercises of the charity that delights in doing good. But if man be not the creature of time, but a candidate for eternity; if his nature involves not merely the tent of clay, but a Spirit deathless as Deity; if eternity is his lifetime, his interests and his destinies all centring there; if, as man is found in this world, he is found in that world; then the charity that has to do with the *soul* and its eternal interests, as far transcends the charity which has to do with the body alone, as eternity transcends time, and the deathless spirit outweighs the tenement that it inhabits.

Therefore, if charity is to be guided by discretion, and discretion is to be informed by Scripture, the charity that has to do with men as immortal beings, is the charity nearest to the charity of God incarnate; who came from heaven to earth, not to heal the body, or provide for the exigencies of time, but to heal the immortal Spirit, and furnish it for the ages of eternity. Therefore, the charities that are designed to instruct the ignorant, to illuminate the dark mind, to convey

the truth of the divine word home to the conscience—those charities that are adapted to promote the ordinances of religion, the sustentation of the sanctuary, for the publication of the gospel, whereby it pleases God to save them that believe—these should take the first place in our estimation, and have the largest share of our benevolence. The worldly man will give to the necessities of the body; it is only the Christian man who will give, from conviction, to the exigencies of the soul: because the exigencies of the one are obvious and palpable to the senses of the unconverted man; but the exigencies of the soul can only be known to him who is conscious of the exigencies of his own soul.

Further: though God uses sometimes the written word, and sometimes employs education, for the conveyance of the light of heaven to the heart, yet, after all, it is by the ministration of his word that he most glorifies his name. If, indeed, the gospel shall be proclaimed to every creature before the last coming of our Lord, then to provide for the preaching of that gospel in its simplicity and purity is the sublimest charity.

Further: if, in order that the solemnization of the ordinances of religion be decently conducted, accompanied with the prayers and the praises that are fitting, that God may be glorified by it, there should be decent and fit houses of prayer, (and though, in early times, the rock and wilderness might form the place of ministration, or a highway, that seed might be sown, yet, at least, it were a reflection on our Christian country, a reflection upon the preaching of the gospel, a reflection on our gratitude to God, if it were necessary thus to drive the gospel abroad, as it were, and not to furnish a place for the tabernacle for the ark of our God)—then, assuredly, to furnish houses of prayer, decent, suitable, and prepared for the ministration of the gospel, and the worship of the public assembly, is, of all charities, perhaps, that a Christian man can promote, the noblest, and most exalted, and the most acceptable to God: for it is, of all means, the most likely, humanly speaking, that God

will make effectual to the salvation of sinners, and the perfecting of his saints.

Beloved brethren, let not this be thought a stronger assertion than may be borne out by truth. Surely I may apply the observation to many that surround me, and say, Is not your own parish a living illustration of the argument I am pressing? Can you not testify, that since that revered individual whom God has exalted now to such a vast scene of ministration (may that God, who has called him to it, give him strength in proportion to his day, that like a fine setting sun, his last days may be his brightest)—can you not testify, that since that revered individual, in the providence of God, had the oversight of the affairs of this vast population of your, at that time, destitute, and very much neglected parish; and since, the good hand of his God with him, he has been able to give willingly himself, and you, his people, were enabled to give willingly also, and cheerfully, to the service of God, and you have seen on the right hand and on the left hand, the houses of prayer, with their heaven-pointed spires and their decent turrets, and you have heard the sound of the Sabbath-speaking bell, inviting your wandering and Sabbath-desecrating population to bend their steps to the holy waters—can you not witness that since then, there has been a mighty reformation within your parish; and can you not say yourselves, that many of you, then strangers to the method of salvation, have been gathered home by the great Shepherd; and that many who laughed at religion, now fear it; and that many who blasphemed the holy Jesus, now praise his holy name; and many that were hastening to hell, are now travelling to heaven; and many that were dead in sin, are alive to God; and that many that were without God and without hope in the world, are now children of God, and heirs of everlasting life? And I may appeal to yourselves, whether you have not a plain, an ocular demonstration, that there is no charity to be compared to that which furnishes houses of prayer, if those houses of prayer be occupied with ministers that speak according to the

oracles of God. Beloved brethren, it is the truest charity for time, as well as for eternity; for the body as well as for the soul. There is a liberality, a prudence, a forethought, a truth: let there be uprightness, and these will all follow in the train of the blessed gospel of Christ Jesus. Let there be but this in any population, and you diminish the amount of poverty, destitution, and crime, and the amount, consequently, of evil, and ensure the amount of social happiness: you make more little cottages bright and happy; you make more fathers and mothers to train up their children in peace and love, in uprightness and honour; and thus, my dear brethren, you leaven the mighty mass of our population. Every church where the gospel is faithfully preached, is, as it were, a little pool of Bethesda, from whence go forth healing waters to heal the salt desert, and to cure the corrupting marshes, that before stagnated around that locality. Therefore we may appeal to your own observation, and to the matter of fact in this parish, whether the erecting of temples to the glory of God, and for the ministration of the gospel, be not the most sublime and noble charity that can engage the heart and the hand of the Christian man.

Beloved brethren, our brethren without the pale of the establishment in this parish, I believe, have also set you an example. I wish not that their temples were fewer, I wish that yours were increased tenfold; and that, instead of keeping behind the population, as is usually the case, the places of prayer went before the congregation; and that thus there were ready furnished the apparatus of spiritual and moral improvement. Then indeed there would be hope that we should have our population springing up in the fear of God. Then we should have more hope that that blessed exhortation of the apostle, that was read in our ear this morning, would be carried into effect, that all men would be loved, that God would be feared, and that the king would be honoured.

Beloved brethren, let me remind you, the church of England has been verily

guilty in the restrictions as to places of worship, which, up to a very late period disgraced her. I say advisedly, *disgraced* her. Had it not been for those suicidal restrictions, a large proportion, I might venture to say one moiety, of all the chapels now without her pale, would have been within her blessed enclosure: we should have had their little turrets, and we should have had the Sabbath-speaking bell echoing from them. She has driven many from her bosom by not providing room for them: for, however you may think you have provided sufficiently, there are individuals in the situation of one who has borne testimony that she has been long resident here, and has sought in vain a solitary sitting for herself, in the church of England. If that individual had been driven into the arms of dissent, we could hardly have blamed her; though she would have done a hundred times better, by waiting till it had pleased God to open a door for her. You see, therefore, that however you may think it well supplied, in reality there is at this moment urgent necessity for more room in the church of England. Hear her crying to you, her children, "Lengthen my cords, and strengthen my stakes, that I may gather to my bosom the multitude of my multiplied children." If the church of England had allowed the principle of voluntary charity in her breast more liberty, you may rest assured, that it would have wrought more powerfully within her; and we might have looked to our temples, and said, Here are the fruits of voluntary love in the church of England. So far is an establishment from overlaying and swamping that principle, that it does but regulate its extravagances, supply its deficiencies, and give it direct and permanent energy.

Therefore, brethren, let us now prove, that greater enlargement is given to us for furthering the interests of the church by multiplying her sanctuaries, that that principle, though it may seem to have been dormant, when not attended to, that the fire was there, and only needed to be allowed to kindle, that it might blaze forth in its beauty and splendour. I am led, therefore, beloved brethren, in bring-

ing the subject home to your minds, to speak to you thus plainly and publicly. If those who are rich—not poor in heart, not with the poverty at which God looks, but with that poverty which makes a man spend all on himself, who has not so much nobleness or generosity of heart given him, that he can feel any happiness in giving to God, but spends all upon his own paltry self, and can have no conception of the duty of giving to the Lord who gave him all; if any such are here, I would say, O, you are the objects of pity: you are, indeed, the mendicants—the individuals that are indeed poor for eternity. O, never rest satisfied till you, by the grace of God, taste the love of Christ; making you love one another; until you are led to feel the impulse and the power of that motive of the apostle, "The love of Christ constraineth us;" and until you can feel the appeal of that disciple whom Jesus loved, "Beloved, if God so loved us, then should we also love one another." You must find the love of God as it is manifested in the cross of Christ, the love of God in choosing you, calling you, redeeming you, accepting you, sanctifying you, glorifying you: and then, brethren, it cannot be but you will love one another.

To the poor I would say, to my Christian brethren who have little to give, Give of that little, and God will esteem it much. If you give it to him with a heart overflowing with love, a heart which he has given to many a poor man, then may your Saviour say to you, as he said to the poor church of Smyrna, "I know thy poverty; but thou art rich." O blessed is the poor man of whom his Saviour can say, "Thou art rich;" for if Christ makes us rich, we are rich indeed. But without him, though the universe were ours, we were poor, poor and perishing. O, then, let the poor man be rich in faith, rich in Christ, rich in contentment, rich in love, rich in charity; and he has no cause to envy his richer neighbours; but rather to bless God that he has not put him off with the riches that perish, but given him the imperishable riches of his grace.

Christian brethren, I would plead with

you on behalf of that house of prayer, which you through the liberality that God has given you, have so far raised, and, I trust, by your liberality, will fit and furnish as becomes the temple of God. You have well done in that which you have done; and assuredly whatever you have given for that object, will not cost you a pang upon your death-bed. You have spent much in other ways that you will look back on then with shame, alarm, and contrition; but for what you have given to God, from love to God, in order that your poorer brethren might become rich through the knowledge of Christ Jesus, you will thank God and say, "Who am I, and what am I, that I should be enabled to give thus willingly to please my God? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have I given thee."

I am told, brethren, that the locality where that new structure is raised, is one where it is especially needed. I am told that the poor around it are casting towards it many a fond look of expectation, and are gladly expecting the time when it will open its doors to welcome them to hear the glad news of salvation. I may add, too, without presumption, from considerable personal knowledge of him on whom the choice of your minister has fallen—that he who is to minister in your sanctuary, is one that loves, I believe, *loves* to preach the gospel of Christ with a fervent and devoted spirit; and one that, from his long ministration amongst you, his acquaintance with your habits, his sympathy with your sorrows, has especial aptitude to serve in that especial ministration to which he is called. So that I can indeed assure you, as far as we may judge of man, he will indeed serve the Lord Christ amongst his poorer members with devotedness of heart and soundness of doctrine. May the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, that has called him to a post of higher responsibility, so succour him by his grace, and guide him by his wisdom, that he may save himself, and those that hear him!

Christian brethren, I invite you then to the honour and privilege of giving something to the great God and Saviour

that has given you all that you have. Whatever of intellect, whatever of calling, whatever of strength, whatever of riches, whatever of comfort, whatever of domestic endearment you possess, all this give him; and you may be assured you will not have too much to give to God. What you keep back unduly from him, that you lose; what you give, out of love to him, that you save. O, be misers there; be avaricious there; you cannot have too much treasure before you in heaven. For a man to have it said of him when he dies, "Such a man has left behind him hundreds of thousands"—how would angels read this on his tomb! They would view it as a mill-stone that sunk him deeper in hell, if he had saved it by robbing his God, and thus robbing his own immortal spirit. Angels would read it—if Christian humility would allow it so to be written there—with joy and gratitude, if it were said, He died poor, for he had given all to God; and yet rich, for God had given all to him—given him his grace, and, in giving him that, given himself. May you so give, and may God so give to you, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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#### PROSPECTS OF AFRICA.

WE need no laborious and critical investigation to determine whether "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God;" no prying into the mystic counsels of heaven, to ascertain whether "the time to favour her, yea, the set time, be come." Go to the colonies, where her sons are in captivity; scarcely is there one of them where this society alone has not one or two, in many, five or six sacred buildings for worship and instruction devoted to their use, and which they regard as peculiarly their own. One colony I except. Sacrilegious hands there rent it to the earth, and denied to the negro his "house of prayer." But that is a solitary monument of shame. For the rest, in those crowded congregations, in those spacious edifices, Ethiopia already "stretches out her hands unto God," and, led by the light which creates our Sabbaths, meets us at the

same throne of grace, and receives, with us, the benedictions of the common Father and the common Saviour. And the prophetic promise is dawning upon parent Africa also. Hottentots, Caffres, Boschuanas, Namaquas, Corranas, Griquas, in the south, Bulloms, Foulahs, and Mandingos, in the west, some of all your tribes are already in the fold, and hear and love the voice of the great Shepherd. We hail you as our brethren! the front ranks of all those swarthy tribes which are deeply buried in the vast interior of an unexplored continent, you stretch out your hands unto God, as a signal for the tribes beyond you; and the signal shall be followed, and every hand of thy millions, Africa! shall raise itself in devotion to thy pitying Saviour, and every lip shall, ere long, modulate accents of grateful praise to thy long-concealed but faithful God.

God is eminently with us in this "labour of love;" nor is it the least important of the indications of his presence, that he whose prerogative it is to send forth labourers into this harvest is conducting the steps of so many into the African field; that a number of holy men, from year to year, have infused into their hearts a special compassion for this race, and prefer to ease at home, and the peace and credit of the Christian ministry in their native land, the danger, the toil, and the reproaches, which still attend the work of negro instruction. Let the memory of those who have finished their work be blessed; of those who have burnt in fevers, languished in prisons, sustained with meekness the scoffs and jests of the impious, and sunk into a premature grave. Their "reward is on high," and their "work with their God." And, as to those who now endure the cross and glory in it, whether they labour under the suns of the West Indies, or in western Africa breathe the pestilential air, or in the southern parts of that continent toil over hills and through deserts, "to seek and to save that which is lost," let these be witnesses to us, on the part of God, that he is with us. What gold could pur-

chase such instruments? What education could form them? What implanted principle of human action, where wealth, and honour, and ease, are all absent, could send them forth? They are the instruments of Heaven, prepared to our hand and for our use, and indicating, by the very nature of their preparation, the special use to which we are to apply them. They are the agents to carry forth our charities to the heathen, to bear our light into the darkness we pity, and our mercy into the misery over which we sigh. Without them we should sigh in vain, and our sympathies would terminate in ourselves; by them we reach and relieve the case of destitute millions, and transmit the blessedness of which we are anxious that all should partake. Thus, man is made a saviour to his fellow, and the creature of a day the instrument of conveying blessings which have no bound but a limitless eternity itself!—*R. Watson.*

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#### AMBIGUOUS PREACHING.

ON coming out of church, I asked Mr. P., a distinguished pious lawyer, how he liked the sermon of Dr. B. "I think, sir," said he, "that it comes under the *third head.*" "How so?" said I. "A certain French preacher," he replied, after a long and pompous introduction, said, "I shall now proceed, my hearers, to divide my subject into three parts. 1. I shall tell you about that which I know, and you do not know. 2. I shall tell you about that which you know, and I do not know. And 3, and lastly, I shall tell you about that which neither you nor I know,"—(Alas! how much preaching "comes under the third head!" How often, when Paul supplies the text, has Tully, Plato, Epictetus taught!) If there was more simple, plain preaching to the conscience, instead of an ostentatious display of learning, or strife about words to no profit; we should see more faithful, consistent Christians, and more done to advance the mild kingdom of peace.—*Friend of Plain Truth.*

## SERMON XXVI.

GOD THE SOURCE OF HAPPINESS.

BY THE REV. G. LEGG. A.M.

“Without God in the world.”—Eph. ii. 12.

“THE fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.” A fool, indeed, he must be; for an idea more pregnant with all that is horrible, I confess myself unable to conceive. I do not mean its contrariety to reason; though, in that respect, the individual who cherishes it may be denominated a “fool;” but I speak of its fatal influence on all that is dear to the human mind. No God! Banish, then, all confidence in the present, all faith on the future; a lawless chance presides in the universe. The glorious sun knows no fixed government; or, if it rules the day, and sheds its heavenly light around us, there is required but a contrary bias in matter, and it shivers into a thousand fantastic motes, destined but to blind. Order, whose voice is heard by the stars in their courses, is expelled from its throne, and chaos exults in their confusion. And life—life which is seen waving in the beauteous verdure of the field, which is felt thrilling and throbbing in our hearts, and seems to glow throughout the universe; life expires and sinks into torpor, or disappears in anguish and despair. No God! I know not, then, when some of the planets shall rush from their spheres, and spread destruction wide around—I know not when some monster shall spring from the womb of nature, whose errand shall be pestilence and death—I know not when the passions of man shall be let loose, and all this confusion become worse confounded. No God! My mind seems torn from its centre, and all nature to feel conscious

alarm. I see but shapeless masses and spectral horrors; I hear but the roar of elements, and am myself tossed, whirled, and agonized in the fathomless profound. No God! The thought is enough to scare reason from its throne, and to despoil the intellect of its every power.

But the sentiment in connexion with the text conveys the truth that there is a God; and the thought is the return of life, and order, and joy. There *is* a God; and, therefore, spring brightens into the beauty of summer; and autumn, in its season, comes with the horn of abundance. There *is* a God; and, therefore, night is clothed with its starry garb, and distils on our eyelids the blessing of repose; and day comes with the rod of its power, unveiling the face of nature, and opening the sources of joy. There *is* a God; and, therefore, love still warms our spirits, and animates us yet more and more. There *is* a God of the present; and, therefore, our earth runs its course through the heavens, and marks its periods of revolution until all the purposes of beneficence are accomplished. And God is, no less, a God of the future, inhabiting eternity; and never shall the light of his countenance cease to smile on creation, until the voice from his throne is heard to diffuse happiness which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived. How delightful the consideration that such a Being there is—One who has given us all things richly to enjoy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore; One with whom is

the fountain of life, and without whom all is death! *Without* whom, did I say? *Without* God? Surely the idea is impossible. By him all that is was made—by him all that is subsists—in him we live, and move, and have our being. His eye is on the smile of the child, and his glance on the tenderness of the mother. His are the tones of a friend, and his the voice of a parent. Of him, and to him, and by him, are all things; existence without him is, therefore, impossible; nature had its birth in his smile, and his smile alone perpetuates its course. He willed it, and we came into being; he wills it again, and we die.

While God has given to the inferior animals existences which yield to the impulse of nature, and passively fulfil his pleasure, he has given to man a will, a mind, which places him first in the scale of being; and while divine Providence conducts him to fulfil his destined end, he can be conscious of all this—he can appreciate all this—he can, with the understanding, know the relation in which he stands to God himself. He can rise above the scenes of this earth, and survey the revolutions and dependencies of the heavenly bodies, trace their courses, and ascertain their periods. He can rise above nature altogether, and wing his flight to nature's God, and survey him in his perfections, rejoice with him in his works, and participate with him in his love. Thus can he walk and dwell with God; this is the high distinction with which reason is privileged. This privilege the angels enjoy in heaven, because they have been made like God; this was the highest privilege of our first sire in the garden of Eden; and can you conceive a greater dignity, or a diviner blessing than this?—to regard the system of things as the empire of Omnipotent Love, and to feel that you have an interest in common with the angels, and in common with your Head. Can there be any dignity greater than this, or ought that can pour sublimer joy into the mind? This is, indeed, to be an heir of God.

But, while this is the high distinction of man, it has its reverse, and it is possible to live in this sense without God in the

world; it is possible to live without any mental recognition of him, without any individual consciousness of relation to him. The rational spirit of man may be so absorbed in the materialism around as never to cast a glance to the Author of all; and the immortal spirit may be so swept down by the current of circumstances as to have no perception of its relationship to the kingdom of spirits, no presentiment of its dependence on the Most High. And though so complete a degradation be not ours; though there is generally among our race some hallucination of the Deity, and some vague anticipation of the future, yet it is a melancholy fact, that, as to the greater portion of our race, there is no prominence of any consciousness respecting him, that deserves the name of life. This was the state of the Ephesians, to whom the apostle wrote; and, alas! my hearers, we fear this may be the case with some of you. We shall endeavour, this evening, to exhibit what is included in being without God; and we shall do so in order that those who feel a consciousness that such is their condition may be aware of its character and its consequences, and may be brought nigh by the blood of Christ.

We shall consider, *first*, WHAT IT IS TO BE WITHOUT GOD IN RELATION TO THE PRESENT; and *then*, WHAT IT IS TO BE WITHOUT GOD IN RELATION TO THE FUTURE.

In answer to the *first* question, WHAT IS IT TO BE WITHOUT GOD IN RELATION TO THE PRESENT, we say,

First, *It is to be without any reference to his being and beneficence*; and, secondly, *without any regard to his authority and will*.

First, we say, it is *to be without any reference to his being and beneficence*. It is not to have God in all our thoughts. We are his creatures, and he has a sovereign claim on our homage. We have received innumerable benefits at his hands; he has given us every demonstration of his being, and his goodness meets us at every turn. Whether we examine the minutiae or the magnitude of this world—whether we regard the petals of a flower, or measure the refulgent sun that gives it

bloom; whether we look on the ephemeral insect, or contemplate the human form divine; whether we look at a single element, how it imparts its influence, or at the whole system of nature, in all its variations, as the display of omnipotent power; in either view we have abundant demonstration of the being of God—and he, how great and good!

But what personal experience has each of us had of his being and goodness? To whom do we owe our rank in the scale of being?—our reason in its glorious powers?—our emotions with all their objects? Whose wing was over us in the days of infancy? Who shielded us in the impetuous career of youth?—and in whose strength do we this evening stand? Surely all these are the expressions of his goodness and truth; to him we are indebted for all. And, standing in this place, can I forget for a moment to whom we are indebted for the gospel, the prospect of life and immortality!—for Jesus Christ, the author of eternal salvation to all who believe? Here we have not only given to us an exhibition of the perfections of God, but those in a direct relation to ourselves, imbodyed in an act which stands alone in the history of the world, and in the annals of eternity; he spared not his own Son. This is his greatest and most transcendent gift. All these we have received from his hand; and they should excite the most adoring admiration, and the most fervent love. Nothing less than such admiration and such love constitute the relation in which we stand to God; these he claims, and these we ought to render.

But where are we to look for this admiration and for this love? When have they been rendered? Shall we look at our race? Shall we look for them in the unsophisticated simplicity of childhood, or the fiery ardour of youth, or the staid sobriety of manhood? Mark the character of the child: do you not discover in all its evolutions nothing but sense? Observe the youth, in all the superfluity of his energy; and what do you find but the same expression of materialism, adorned perhaps with fancy? And, in manhood, how few are there, respecting

whom we may not say, that all their hearts, and souls, and minds, and strength are the world's entirely! Man comes into the world an object of sense, and matures into a being of sense. His nature is carnal; he is altogether of the earth, earthly. No sooner is his consciousness awake, than all his senses waken too. His passions and emotions afterwards arise, and throw around a sweeter charm: reason advances in its majesty; but still sense is ascendant. The prospect of worldly good arouses all the energies of his mind. The genius of the earth (so to speak) has thrown its chain around the immortal spirit; and however you may show it to be a chain, though wreathed with flowers, he grasps it in his hand still, and will not let it go.

This is the melancholy fact; this is the nature of man. He is entirely devoted to objects that are seen and temporal, to the utter disregard of things that are unseen and eternal. This is the character of the vast majority of our race. And let me ask you—and be not offended that I ask you—whether this be not the character you sustain? Is God supreme in your thoughts, or is the world the subject of your chief contemplations? Do you walk in the light of God's countenance, or are you led captive by the wicked one at his pleasure? You rise in the morning, and look abroad with invigorated strength. Let me ask you if your thoughts then aspire to Him whose you are, and whom you ought to serve? You sit around the table, and partake of nature's feast, and the gifts of nature are in your hands: do your thoughts aspire to Him on whom all depend? You engage in the business of the world, and object after object crowds on your attention: do you then remember Him, whose are all the wheels of providence, and all the mazes of circumstance, and who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will? And again the shades of night return, and the world is shut from your view, and goodness and mercy are still your portion: do you then, in faith and love, rise to Him who has preserved you, asking pardon for the past, and confiding in him for the future? O, my hearers, with how few of our fellow

beings is this the specimen of a day! How many are there who, from day to day, and from week to week, live without God in the world—without Him who ought to be the centre of the soul! But the love of pleasure, or the love of riches, or the love of honour, is the superior emotion of your soul; and thus God is banished from your presence, and your spirits have no share in his love.

Is not this a degraded condition? You are, in this state, far removed from the highest style of man. However moral you may be—however intellectual or respectable you may be—you are most deplorable and most ignoble. While you remain without thoughts of God, you are exiled from a place more brilliant than ever imagination can conceive; while you continue without a sense of surrounding goodness, you are excluded from a paradise, the loveliness of which it never entered the mind to imagine. And can the immortal soul thus be satisfied? Men of the world—ye children of sense—ye who are reckless of your fate, we conjure you, by all that you love, to awake; by the love of the King of heaven, and the destiny he has given you to fulfil, to awake from the degradation of your state, tear the veil from your eyes, burst the fetters that hold you to the earth, and become, each of you, an heir of heaven!

We remark, in the second place, that, to be without God, is to live without any regard to his authority and to his will. This is an inevitable conclusion from the preceding position. Being strangers to the character and perfections of God, it is of necessity that you are disregarding his authority and his will. The idea furnishes the most serious considerations, and may lead to the most important results.

To be without God is to be without regard to his authority and will. We are the creatures of God, and are bound to yield obedience to his laws. His authority is founded on the relationship that exists between him and us, as the Creator and the creature; and his will is the expression of that authority. The essential feature in his will is the exhibition of sovereign love; and his law,

therefore, is the expression of infinite love. Our first sire heard it in the rapturous discourse of the seraphs, and beheld its effects in the immortal bowers of Eden. Much is still felt in the glow of holy feeling, in the nobleness of self-denying effort, and in all the good with which our world abounds; and it shall be felt most illustriously in the celestial world, whose builder and whose maker is God.

You perceive that, in our obedience to this will, there can be no hardship; but what is the state of man in relation to it? He has not rendered unto God his due, nor worshipped him in the beauty of holiness; he has broken his bands asunder, and cast away his cords from him. This law included the whole of our nature; it would have filled the understanding with all great and beautiful forms; it would have filled the heart with all pure and ennobling emotions; it would have filled the life with all good and glorious doings. But where is the man who has rendered thus to God, or who has acted in every other relationship according to the will of God? Who is there that cannot take up the language of Jehovah, "They are all gone aside; they are altogether become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one!"

There are two classes involved in this charge—*those who have the semblance of good, and those who are destitute of every appearance of it.* To the first class belong those whose honour is unstained, and whose integrity is unimpeached, and whose beneficence pours forth blessings on every hand. We do not blame men for possessing these attributes—religion would impart them to all; but these virtuous qualities may be *the result of a generous love, or they may be mere assumption and pretence.* In either case, they increase and aggravate the guilt; and, so far from diminishing the doom, they will enhance it in seven-fold fierceness. For, if they be the result of a *mere generous nature*, there is a deeper responsibility involved; there should be more ardent thanksgiving, and more devoted service: and if the authority of God be disregarded while these qualities

are cherished, then the nature is merely a frightful deformity. If they be *assumption and pretence*, the mere garb of a more interested and selfish purpose, they are indeed contemptible; they are their own condemnation, and "He that sitteth in heaven shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision."

But far more numerous is the class of those who have *not even the appearance of good*—who have broken their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from them. In their minds a civil war rages, and enmity against God; and every aspect of turpitude, and every perpetration of guilt, proceed from these. All these are the result of a disregard to the authority of God. Nothing but that, as a fixed principle in the mind—a permanent, everlasting principle in the mind, is adequate to control our nature, and harmonize its emotions. It is, indeed, the key-stone of our moral nature, the centre of our social system. Remove it, and it is as if the stone which is the security of the arch were removed; remove it, and it is as if the sun were blotted from the sphere, and the law of central gravitation annulled. The authority of God, as the presiding, dominant principle of the mind, has been removed; and the consequence has been that all virtuous action has been paralyzed, God is spurned, and his government treated with insult and dishonour.

Who is not involved in this charge? Where is the individual that has ever been walking as seeing him who is invisible? Who has held all his laws sacred? Who is there before me who has not lifted his arm in rebellion against him? It is a solemn consideration: unless you have been subdued by the constraining love of Jesus—unless you have been made new creatures in him, the principles with which you were born—which have grown with your growth, and strengthened with your strength, have put you in a position of opposition to God, have placed you at variance with the Most High. Think, my dear hearers, my fellow beings—think of the position in which, as sinners, you are placed. You are at variance with him in whose hand are the thunders of omnipotence; you are standing aloof from all

the beatified and glorious host of heaven. Be reconciled, we beseech you; cast down your weapons of rebellion, and give yourselves to him. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Submit yourselves to his sway; submission is no dishonour; it gives to the angel his crown of glory, and to the saint his harp of love: it is no degradation; it gives birth to all the sympathies of heaven. "Seek, then, the Lord while he may be found." "Consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."

We have now shown you what it is to be without God in the world, in reference to *the providence*, and in reference to *the will of God*. We might marshal before you the ministers of his wrath—the flood to deluge your produce—the flames to consume your dwelling—the pestilence to snatch away your dearest friends. We might show you the ravages of disease, and recount the shipwrecks of fortune, and the wastings of the desolating sword. We might show what God has done to vindicate his honour; we might set before you the anguish of sorrow, the bitterness of remorse, the agonies of the worm that never dies, and the fire that is never to be quenched. But this might not suit universal experience. This is the period of probation. God showers his blessings on one class as well as on another; his rain descends on the unjust as well as on the just. Let, then, the external circumstances of the unrighteous, or the man that lives without God, be what they may,—let every morning introduce him to a region where he may move in honour, or yield himself to worldly pleasure; let every evening present to him a round of delights, and night spread for him her soft couch of repose; let his present circumstances be all his heart can wish, so that he may say, "Soul, take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry!"—all this is but for a time; in an hour it shall come to an end; and then, better had it been for him if he had never been born.

Having shown you, then, what it is to be without God, in relation to *the present*, we proceed now to show, very briefly,

WHAT IT IS TO BE WITHOUT GOD IN RELATION TO THE FUTURE.

We said, to be without God in relation to the present was to be without any regard to his being and beneficence, or any regard to his authority and will. We shall keep up the same idea, and say that, to be without God, in reference to the future, is to be *without any experience of the goodness and beneficence of God—without any regard to the authority of God.*

It is to be *without any experience of the goodness and beneficence of God.* Tell me, my hearers, what we shall have left when that goodness is withdrawn? What is there in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath, or below the circling waves—what is there in the frame of our bodies, or in the constitution of our spirits, or in the range of society—what is there in our entire consciousness, that we do not owe to the beneficence of God? Without the beneficence of God, farewell to the green earth and the azure sky—farewell to the stars of night and to the king of day—farewell to the mountains where the eagle sits enthroned, and to the valley where the beasts repose—farewell to the beauties of creation, to the treasures of heaven, and the rolling year! Without God! Farewell, then, to all the charms of friendship; to all the delights of charity; to all the exquisiteness of human kindness; to all the pomp and circumstance of life; to all that ever soothed the melancholy spirit! Never more shall delight sparkle in the eye; never more shall the heart beat high with conscious pride; never more shall the soul rise in the consciousness of its immortality. The heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; the earth and its works shall be burnt up. Gone for ever shall be the theatre of manly exploit and of noble effort—gone the chance of happiness and ever-rising joys! Gone, did I say? Yes, from the sense, but never from the soul. Never shall the vision of the splendid universe vanish from the mental eye; never shall the voice of blessed spirits cease to hum in the ear. And who shall tell the wo of the immortal spirit, with all its high capacities of good, for ever banished from

it all? Who can tell the wo of the spirit, with its aspirations after bliss, cast away from all bliss, banished to eternal wo? Who can tell the agony of its regret, and the fierceness of its despair?

To be without God, in the future, is to be *without any regard to the authority of God.* And though this may appear at first rather an unmeaning addition, yet if you truly weigh and ponder its meaning; if you reflect that it is the authority of God that sustains the pillars of heaven, and maintains the bliss of the redeemed; that it is the authority of God alone that preserves this world in a state of order, and prevents the elements from running into confusion; when we reflect that the absence of the authority of God would be the entire abolition of the laws, and the consequent unhingement of nature: when you reflect on all this, you must perceive in it the seeds of a burden of incomprehensible woes; it is, indeed, the very essence of hell. Without the authority of God, every element is unbridled, and every passion let loose. No authority of God! Then hail, ye doleful sounds of elements confused—whirlwind and earthquake, flood and conflagration! Hail, ye imps of darkness, miscreant shapes, whose breath withers the soul, whose yell rends every fibre of the heart! And hail, too, ye foul beings, chiefs in hell, who, in ages past, were driven from heaven into the bottomless pit!

But where is the reality of the picture I have gazed on? O, that shout of satanic execration! O, that look of unutterable contempt! Who but a madman would desire to live in a world without the authority of God! I dare not utter what my fancy would draw forth; but do, for a moment, think of a world in this condition;—every spirit actuated by its own passions, every element pursuing its own career. Think, what must be the condition of those involved in such a doom. We will not penetrate farther into the secrets of the dark abyss; but we cannot hear the cry which reverberates from the pit for ever and ever; we cannot think of the agonies of the lost throughout eternity, without warning you to flee from the wrath to come. If you are now living

without God, live not another hour in such a condition.

There are before me those who have already recognised him as their Father and their portion; and we call on them to awaken every power of thanksgiving and praise. How happy is the condition to which you are raised! How transcendent the deliverance which you have experienced by being saved from these tremendous woes! Before you is an eternity of happiness; awaken, then, every power of thanksgiving and praise.

And you who are conscious that you are still living without God; you who are conscious that you are living without any recognition of his kindness, and of his love, as manifest in every situation of life; you who are conscious that you are still living in violation of his laws, insulting his kingdom and his honour—O, my dear hearers, we beseech you to think of your condition! Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; repair instantly to the throne of mercy, on which Immanuel is seated as the Lamb slain for the sin of the world. Repair instantly to the mercy-seat, which has been sprinkled with the blood that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. If you seek him, he will be found of you; if you forsake him, he will cast you off into outer darkness, into ceaseless misery, into eternal wo. Now it is *matter of choice* with you to live without God; *hereafter* it will be *matter of necessity*. Now you *choose* to live without God, without the God of holiness and love; you *choose* to stand aloof from him and all his joys; you *choose* to do this! O, what magnanimity! O, what heroism! You *choose now* to stand apart from the Eternal, the Glorious, and the Divine: the time is coming when you shall be *obliged* to stand apart; when, *for ever*, you shall stand aloof from all the glories of the divine character. Now he calls upon you: he lifts up his voice, he extends his hand; you will not hear, you will not regard. The time is coming when you shall call on him, but he will not answer; you shall stretch forth your hand, but he will disregard; nay, “he will laugh at your calamity, he will mock when your fear cometh!” O, my dear

hearers, we repeat again, “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near;” and he will bring himself near to you, and you shall become the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty!

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THE CHRISTIAN HOPE AN ANCHOR TO THE SOUL.

WHEN a vessel is at anchor, the sea may be dreadfully boisterous; the wind may blow, the tempest howl, and the waves heave; but if the ship be what they call sea-worthy, in a firm, stout condition, the cable sufficiently strong, and the anchor struck deep into tenacious soil beneath, though she be most terribly tossed and buffeted about by the winds and the waves, yet she rides in security on the surface of the deep, the anchor is a stay to her, keeps her from driving among rocks, and striking upon quick-sands; if all be firm, and steady, and tight, she rides upon the storm, and outbraves the tempest, severe as it may be. With admirable propriety and aptness is this image made use of by the apostle himself, in describing the actual operation and exercise of the Christian hope. The best, the most eminent, exemplary, and hopeful Christians, while they are here, in the world and in the body, find themselves by no means exempt from the common cares and evils of their fellow men, nor exempt from the peculiar tribulations of the Christian life, the struggles, the self-denials, the difficulties, the conflicts of the Christian warfare. They all find their great Lord's prediction verified in one way 'or another: “In the world ye shall have tribulation.” They are in many cases, as it is scripturally expressed, “tossed with tempests,” on the uncertain, turbulent, and changeful ocean of life. But the question is, In these circumstances, what do they actually find the gospel hope to be to them? What is the essential end it answers to them? Does it still the storm as with a word? Does it rebuke the winds and the waves, and, as by miracle or magic, produce instantaneously a great calm, as Christ did? No; in ordinary cases, it

does not: in some very extraordinary ones, perhaps, it may have done so: in florid, high-wrought descriptions from the pulpit, by young, inexperienced orators, it is sometimes represented as always doing so; but this certainly is not the ordinary experience of the most serious Christians; it was not the ordinary experience even of apostles: "Troubled on every side; persecuted; cast down, as sorrowful, as poor, as having nothing," is more frequently the language of their experience. But the ordinary operation of the Christian hope, is exactly that, to the renewed mind, which the anchor is to the vessel at sea; it is a stay and rest to it; it keeps the storm, as it were, at bay; it keeps the mind from being driven on temptation, despondency, and destruction; there is an humble, cheerful, consoling, supporting sense of security amidst all, in the promises, and consolations, and provisions of the everlasting covenant. In other words, "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keepeth the heart and mind, through Christ Jesus." It does not annihilate the cares, and conflicts, and troubles of life, nor ward off their influence altogether, but keeps the mind in some degree of security and serenity in the midst of all. Does not this just correspond with your experience, Christians? Your hope is not the actual accomplishment of every thing to you; you are not in the harbour; you have not reached the eternal shore; you have not actually entered into rest; you find yourselves at sea still; and sometimes tossed and agitated not a little; but your hope sticks by you as a fast and steady friend.—*Rev. T. N. Toller.*

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#### MINISTER'S STYLE SHOULD BE POPULAR.

A PREACHER is not confined to the abstract and cold method of argumentation, but may throw in whatever tends to make the force of the argument better felt, or to render it fitter to touch the heart. In such sermons, a degree of ornament may

be admitted, which would be very unsuitable to a philosophical examination of the evidence of principles. Were a metaphysician to produce a proof of the being of God, he would satisfy himself with giving a plain and conclusive argument for it; but a preacher should set that argument in a more popular light, that it may produce a sense of the divine existence, fit to remain with men, and to influence them in life. He must turn every part into sentiment; he must show that he himself has a strong conviction of it; he must not urge the argument in general, but must, in every part of it, give a view of some particular existence, and a lively picture of the impressions of the Creator which it bears—the same proof which he represents, so as fully to convince the understanding, he must make to strike the imagination, and to touch the heart.—*Gerard.*

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#### SEEK TO SAVE SOULS.

DURING a recent voyage, sailing in a heavy sea, near a reef of rocks, a minister on board the vessel remarked, in a conversation between the man at the helm and the sailors, an inquiry whether they should be able to clear the rocks without making another tack; when the captain gave orders that they should put off, to avoid all risk. The minister observed, "I am rejoiced that we have so careful a commander." The captain replied, "It is necessary that I should be very careful, because I have souls on board. I think of my responsibility; and, should any thing happen through carelessness, I should have a great deal to answer for: I wish never to forget, sir, that souls are very valuable!" The minister, turning to some of his congregation, who were upon deck with him, observed, "The captain has preached me a powerful sermon; I hope I shall never forget, when I am addressing my fellow creatures on the concerns of eternity, that *I have souls on board!*"

## SERMON XXVII.

THE BLESSED RESULTS OF PERSEVERING PRAYER.

BY THE REV. J. GOOD.

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*“ And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.”—Luke xviii. 1.*

THE character under which the psalmist addresses God, in the sixty-fifth Psalm, is—“Thou that hearest prayer.” He sets this character of God especially before him, when he would approach his throne, as his encouragement so to do. And it appears from the following verses in that psalm, that sin lay, at the time, heavy upon his mind. He immediately realizes God’s readiness to hear the prayer of his humble suppliant, that he might have confidence to come to him, and cast his burden down, where alone he had any prospect of relief: “Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.”

But it is very necessary, my brethren, that we should have the same persuasion—that it is not in vain to pray. Prayer is as essential to the life of the soul as bread is for the body. Prayer is one of the very first acts of spiritual life: as it was said of Saul of Tarsus—“Behold he prayeth.” There was an evidence that he was a spiritual man, a converted being. And it is the principal ordinance appointed by God for maintaining spiritual life in vigour, and for bringing it to maturity. I suppose that there is nothing, by which we form so true an estimate of our spiritual condition at any time, as by the enjoyment of our souls in this all-important exercise.

I speak not here of sensible enjoyment in prayer, lively feelings of devotion, when our hearts burn within us, and our tongues catch the holy flame, and the whole soul is poured forth unto God in

ardent aspirations of prayer and praise. Nor do I speak of those kindly and pleasurable emotions of godly sorrow, working repentance unto salvation never to be repented of. These are indeed very precious emotions, they are rich in blessings to the soul; but they are usually brief, merely occasional refreshings by the way, to support us under the general ruggedness of it. We are ready to say at such times, “Master, it is good for us to be here.” But it is not so, or we should certainly enjoy more of such seasons. In truth, if such communion with God was ordinary with the soul, it would be more like that sensible communion, which is reserved for a future state; but “the just shall live by faith;” and this is true of every particular respecting it. “The just shall live by faith”—his prayer must be a prayer of faith, not of sense, and by the engaging of the soul in this exercise—I mean our steadfast continuance in our patient waiting on God, in the unshaken conviction of his faithfulness and love, whatever be our measure of sensible enjoyment, by it we bring honour to God. It is, assuredly, the evidence of spiritual health and strength, and of no small measure of divine grace, in those in whom it is found.

We are such creatures of sense, that the best of us, the most spiritual among us, are not half awake to spiritual things. We are continually prone to live more on our feelings in religion, than on the simple word of truth; and when God shuts us up to this, so that we have nothing

but his word of truth to animate our hopes, and to support our courage, then our hearts fail us, we are ready to give up prayer; and if we give it not entirely up, it is turned into bitter lamentation, complaining, and desponding; we expect, in fact, nothing from it.

But our gracious Lord well knew the difficulties and discouragements which cause us to grow weary and to faint in this duty, and here he sets himself to their removal. And, in his admirable acquaintance with the spring and action of the human heart, he is not contented with a bare exhortation to the duty of persevering in prayer, but, with wonderful skill, he sets here before us a case, in which the extreme of helplessness on the one hand, and a heartless and cruel indifference on the other, are combined; and by simply stating, what all men see to be, the natural result of importunity, even in circumstances so hopeless, he brings home the appeal with irresistible energy to every soul—whether it is possible, where God is the party on the one hand, and the people of his love on the other, that their cry shall be ultimately disregarded.

May the spirit of Jesus, my brethren, cause us to feel the force of this striking similitude; may he encourage us by it to never-wearying, never-ceasing prayer, though every thing in us, around us—the word of God, the providence of God, the long-continued silence of God, may seem to be against us: “They shall not be ashamed that wait for me.”

Consider, in the *first* place, THE CASE PUT BY OUR BLESSED LORD IN THE PARABLE BEFORE US.

*Secondly*, THE EXCEEDING ENCOURAGEMENT WHICH IT IS CALCULATED TO AFFORD US.

First, *The case put by our blessed Lord.* “There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man; and there was a widow in that city, and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.” Now mark, how, in the circumstance here mentioned, there was every kind of discouragement. First, in the character of the person to whom the application was made. The man

who alone could redress the wrong of this woman, in virtue of the office which he sustained, was totally devoid of feeling or principle. It was vain: to hope, because of the justice of her plea, because of any guilt in the sight of God, or public scandal among men, that might attach to the neglect of an appeal that was so reasonable, which came from one whose destitute condition demanded peculiar sympathy: we are told, he “feared not God, neither regarded man.” There was no such thing as touching him by those common arguments and motives, which would address themselves, generally, either to the fears or to the feelings of men. Such, then, was the character of the person appealed to—one who “feared not God, neither regarded man,” and the only person, in virtue of his office, who could relieve her.

Now, consider further the case of the applicant. Men, who long sue in vain, may have it in their power to prevail at the last; or, if they cannot succeed of themselves, their friends may take up their cause; and family interest, family influence, may at length prevail. But here we have a poor destitute and friendless widow. Argument she has none, helpers she has none, and, as we have seen, hope from the character of the judge she could have none; her sole resource was, then, to come from day to day, and use the same appeal: Avenge me of mine adversary.

Alas, my brethren, how awful is the reflection, which we cannot omit, though it is indeed foreign to our immediate purpose—I say, how awful is the reflection, that such a picture as this should be one drawn from real life. There are not a few, like this wicked judge, who take advantage of the friendless and powerless condition of the widow, and the orphan, the weak in sex, or age, or circumstances, to injure them, as they suppose, with impunity; forgetting or despising the eye of Him, who has described himself the father of the fatherless, the judge of the widow, and as God, in his holy habitation, who has declared himself judge of all such; their Redeemer is mighty, he shall plead their cause for them.

But to return. If we were addressing such a person, what could we say to her; nay, what in general might we suppose, that she should say of herself? Of what use is it that I should cry to this man; what hope can I possibly entertain, when God and man are alike set at naught by him? I must abide by the wrong, and suffer all. But it was not so, brethren, here. She came, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary; and when once coming and saying this was of no avail, she came and said it again and again, from day to day. Her cry was importunate; her plea was altogether against hope; still she persevered in hope. All must certainly be lost by the abandonment of her plea, if any thing could be gained by its continuance; and therefore she came often, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while; but afterwards he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And thus, you observe, under all these truly hopeless circumstances, her importunity prevails; and the result, here represented by our Lord in the parable before us, is as natural as it is instructive. Earnest desire constrains us to be importunate; and importunity will often succeed where there is no feature in the case that could give us the faintest prospect of relief.

And now consider, in the next place, *the exceeding encouragement which this parable is calculated to afford us.* And the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge saith,"—that wicked heartless man, following the only selfish impulse of his own evil heart, moved by the mere din of her importunity to relieve her—"Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you, that he will avenge them speedily." Now observe, that our Lord here argues from the less to the greater—from the fact of successful importunity, in a case that seemed every way desperate, to the abundant encouragement of such importunity, in a case where every considera-

tion, as respects God, or as respects man, is replete with animating assurances.

Take the case, my brethren, as representing the character of God. He it is to whom the ultimate appeal must be made, in all circumstances of distress and need: "The poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless." On him alone it depends, to give or withhold all blessings or deliverances. O how important then, is a proper acquaintance with his character, and with his revealed will, if we would draw near to him with any confidence of his favour.

Consider, then, what God is in himself. It was not in vain, saith our Lord, to cry importunately to the unjust and unfeeling man; and shall not God avenge us. Think what is his character, as he himself has described it, for assuring the fainting heart of the guilty and undone sinner. My brethren, the difficulty here is to select, where all Scripture is full of encouragement. Listen to a few passages. "The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion, long-suffering, and of great kindness." "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." Here again, more particularly, as respects the praying soul. "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all them that call upon him in truth." "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him; he also will hear their cry, and will help them." Again: "The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." O what words, I say, of encouragement are these, not setting forth the Lord's riches, as they display merely his own glory and greatness, as Hezekiah displayed his wealth to foreigners who had no share in them; but he is rich without any limitation. For is there here any exception, any limitation, any thing that should check me, and discourage me, when I would appeal to him, and take the comfort of this? No, my brethren, "He is rich unto all that call upon him:" for "who-soever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

But we may go further than this. It is not God's mercy only, which affords

encouragement and confidence to the sinner, to urge his suit before him. It is true this is the first consideration, which will revive the hopes of the convinced and self-condemned penitent; but when he comes to understand the revelation of God's grace, in the gospel of Jesus Christ, then he will see, that the glory of every attribute of the divine character is justice to the Son of his love. His faithfulness to his covenant engagement, his truth in the fulfilment of innumerable promises, his unchangeableness in executing his revealed purposes—all these are deeply concerned in his taking up the cause of those who commit their spirit to him, who commit their temporal and their spiritual interests into his hands.

My brethren, the poor widow, whose case we have been considering, had no promises to plead. The honour or interest of the man to whom she came, were in nowise involved in granting her petition. She had no friend at his court to intercede for her, and still less could she plead any thing like affinity to him, before whom she came; her importunity was her only hope, and it prevailed.

But we must remember, that the believer in Jesus has all this on his side, when he comes to God through Christ. Jesus has procured for him reconciliation to God, has merited for him a free bestowal of all spiritual blessings. The believer, in coming to God, has promises, exceeding great and precious promises, of all things which pertain unto life and godliness: so that he may go to God, with God's own pledges in his hand; he may remind God of his own words; yea, he may plead the oath of God, as the warrant for expecting the mercy which he asks—"God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things wherein it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before us." Well, then, I ask, shall not God avenge?

To confine our thoughts to a few particulars where enumeration is endless and encouragement inexhaustible. Consider

the provision which God has made, the pains, so to speak, which God has been at, that he might open a way for sinners to come and plead with him for blessings; and remember, that he would have been infinitely righteous in rejecting us, in rejecting any cry of guilty and vile offenders. But he has set for us the throne of grace; and to do this was no mere act of sovereignty on the part of God, as he said, "Let there be light, and there was light;" but it required the sacrifice of his own well beloved Son for sinners. Yes, my brethren, the foundations of that throne of grace are laid in blood—the blood of Jesus; they rest upon his cross: "We have boldness," saith the apostle, "to enter into the holiest of holies by the blood of Jesus; by a new and living way, which he has consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say his flesh." It is to such a God, then, that we come, seated on a throne of grace, and all the beams of his glory, as revealed on that throne of grace—mercy and peace to whomsoever will. There also is provided for our encouragement, the blood of sprinkling, that our consciences may be cleansed from guilt, that we may have courage to speak to Him, who sits on that throne, as a friend, a father, a reconciled God, and as one who has no charge of condemnation to lay against any who believe in Jesus. There also we have an advocate with the Father—his own Son Jesus Christ the righteous, the propitiation for our sins; one who ever liveth to make intercession for us, ever lives that we may come through him, and daily, in a sense of our defilement, renew our peace with God. There, too, is that Spirit of God, that cleanseth our infirmity: He meets the bewildered and faint-hearted soul—the man ignorant, in a great measure, of what are his own wants and dangers, and he makes intercession for him according to the will of God.

And is this, my brethren, the God to whom we are invited—is it he who has thus provided for sinners—did he conceive the plan and arrange it, and by his Son execute it, and by his Spirit reveal it? And shall not God avenge—shall an

unjust judge be overcome by importunity, and shall God have gone thus out of his way to give us ordinances, and after all say to any, "Seek ye me in vain."

But we may here consider another particular which adds exceedingly to the encouragement of our importunity in drawing near to God; and that is, not only God's character to whom we come, but the deep and peculiar interest which he has in us, who thus come to Him through Christ, "his own elect." The poor widow drew nigh to one who had not a spark of feeling for her, or of favour towards her; it concerns not him for a moment who she was or what became of her: but, O it is far otherwise, my brethren, with all God's praying people—they are "his own elect." They belong to him in a relation inconceivably near and dear, even as they are one in Christ; a relation surpassing in interest all that is known upon earth; whoso toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye. It is true he bears long, as respects them; their adversaries seem to triumph, and for the present they have an advantage over them in number and in influence; their spiritual enemies oppress them, and make them sad whom God has not made sad; and all things oftentimes appear to be entirely against them. There have been times when the very name of this God and Saviour exposed them to brutal cruelty and indignity, to the loss of all their earthly substance, yea, to the fire and the sword; and this same name of their God, confessed in this day, not in word only, but in power, still exposes them to the enmity of an unbelieving world, to the furious assaults of principalities, and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world. God seems to wink at it, to care nothing for it; the enemies of the church without, the more dreadful adversaries of the soul within, seem to be carrying all before them. We might say of God, as it was said here, when the cry was uttered—"Avenge me of my adversary. And he would not for a while." But do those cries, this importunate wrestling of his believing, his sorely oppressed people, which enter into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth—do they

indeed enter there in vain? Cruelty, sense, and impenitent unbelief, say, Yes, they do; the heaven-born faith of God's elect, says No, and that in all darkness, No, though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; truly I have looked long, and yet he delays, but I will look again towards his holy temple; though the vision tarry, I will wait for it, for it shall surely come. This is the language of faith. That poor widow conquered the wicked judge by waiting long for him, pressing him with importunity: and shall not God avenge his own elect, who cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? "I tell you," saith our Lord, "he will avenge them speedily."

Thus, then, the parable set forth by our Lord powerfully teaches us this important lesson—always to pray and not to faint. My brethren, this were our wisdom, though all things, as respects God's character, or our own condition, were just as hopeless, as in the case we have been considering. How much more, then, should it be so, when the purposes of his unchangeable love—when his tender regard for every thing which concerns his chosen and faithful people, is taken into account? But even supposing that it was not so—put the case that sinners, in drawing near to God, have to draw near to a being even such as I have described—a wicked and unjust judge; that they were as destitute of any thing on their part to touch the heart of God, as was that widow to touch the heart of her judge; yet even so, her case will prove to you that it were wise to pray, yea, always to pray and not to faint.

Thus you perceive our gracious Lord comes down, as it were, to those low and hard thoughts, which we are too apt to entertain of God, and those discouraging apprehensions which beset us, as respects ourselves. We think of God often, as though nothing could move him. God has forsaken me; God has forgotten me; he is so high, and we are so mean; he is so holy, and we so polluted; it is vain for us to expect any favourable notice at his hands. Or, again, if we were sure that we were his people, his own elect, so that the promises and encouragements

of his word belong to us, then we could draw near, we say, with holy courage, then we could persevere with faith, with the assurance that in his good time we should receive an answer of peace. But you must observe, my brethren, that the argument here for prayer rests not on any revelation of the grace and goodness of God, and still less on any evidence in ourselves, that we are the people of his choice. It is true, as far as these things are apprehended, so far we have yet more abundant encouragement to wait patiently in persevering prayer. But further, saith our Lord, suppose it were quite otherwise, put these things at the very lowest, still she, who under similar circumstances continued to urge her suit, and gained it by so doing, is a lesson to you, always to pray and not to faint.

But let me apply this subject, in the first place, to those among us, and perhaps they are many, who never pray. And I speak not here, my brethren, of merely repeating prayers, saying our prayers as people do; that is customary with very many, who know not at all what real spiritual supplication is, fervent desire of the soul after God, and they are conscious that this is so with them. Their hearts go not forth to God from day to day; they do but repeat the form, and that form speaks of blessings, which they are well contented to go without, and depicts spiritual enjoyments which they neither feel nor care for; they do it because they have been taught to do it, but they know not what it is to pray indeed. O my brethren, let me say to you, how awful is your character and your conduct, in contrast with the people of God! See the mark by which they are here described—"who cry day and night unto God."

And have you then no spiritual wants—are you in no danger of wrath to come—is there no enemy seeking your destruction as well as others, and have you no need of Christ, as a precious Saviour from guilt, from the love and power and curse of sin? And if it be so, does God care so little for you that you count it altogether fruitless labour to be a suitor: that even the unjust judge shall

receive more solicitation at the hand of man than you think it worth while to spend on God? Surely so it is: unbelief turns all the revelation of God's love in Jesus Christ, all the promises of his word—so free, so full, so without limitation—turns them all into a lie. Surely it is so; the most senseless of men must at times have consciousness of sin and of danger, by reason of sin from which they would gladly seek deliverance, if they really thought that prayer would avail them.

But our subject addresses itself to the praying remnant, to the people of God, to those who are ready to faint while God delays to speak, and avenge their cause. O my beloved brethren, learn from this subject always to pray and not to faint. It is no new thing for the elect of God to be thus exercised; not because God is slow to redress, or indifferent to the sorrows of his people, or that he has any pleasure in their anxieties and vexations, but this experience is suited to creatures in our condition. As a discipline it is very useful, as all the people of God sooner or later find and confess. It serves to keep us proud sinners humble; it makes us dependent, calls out and keeps in exercise the various graces of the Christian character; and brings glory to God, while it manifests the reality of the power of his grace in creatures who are naturally so feeble and weak. God makes it also the occasion at the last of putting glory on his people, in the undeniable evidence which is thus afforded of the truth of his work in their souls, and in the more abundant communication of the desired blessings in the appointed, though long expected, delayed season of its bestowal. O then, I say to you, whatever be your trials, whatever your discouragements, never give up prayer. Be in your own estimates as was this poor widow, and let God be no better in your eyes, no more likely to befriend you, than this unjust judge, if you dare to think so, yet, I say, even as she prevailed by her importunity, so shall you. And O what shall not you do with your God? We are far too ready to conclude judgments by a fear that God has

fixed this or that so to be, so that it is no use to plead with him, especially as it has often been the subject of our prayers, and there was no immediate improvement in our prospects. For instance, our friends or our dearest relations are graceless unconvertible persons, they go on from year to year, and then seem to us to grow harder in their wickedness; we are ready to think we know God's purposes respecting them, we count their salvation to be hopeless, and if we mention them in prayer it is with very faint, if any expectation, that God will answer our prayer. So again, under personal afflictions, we are ready to grow weary of God's kindnesses, and say there is no need of them—there is no hope of their being otherwise—he is of one mind and who shall turn him. So again, in our conflict with corruption, the experience of the dreadful and constant opposition of our cruel adversaries, when we have made many a struggle, and yet his power seems hardly to be touched. O then, it seems impossible that God can care for us. We have used every argument, we have prayed, we have confessed, we have wept, and resolved, and resisted, and yet there is no effectual deliverance. What shall we do more? Do, my brethren, as this poor widow did—come again and again, come with the same plea, "Avenge me of mine adversary." Lord, help me! Always pray and faint not. We do not want instances of this, and most successful instances. Jacob, my brethren, did this: he had wrestled all night, and instead of prevailing, his strength was withered by the touch of him with whom he strove; but he let not go, "No," saith he; when the angel said unto him, "Let me go, for the day breaketh," he said, "No, I will not let thee go unless thou bless me." Now there was faith in exercise that should be the language of every praying soul—Lord, I cannot let thee go, I cannot desist from this suit of mine unless thou bless me. Again, the woman of Canaan did this: Jesus himself, the all-tender and compassionate Saviour, repels her from him, calls her almost in the direct terms—a dog; be it so then, as a dog, will she come to him and turn the very

reproach into an argument. "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the master's table." O great and successful faith! Nay, my brethren, to ascend yet a step higher, this very Lord himself has taught us by his own example, when he was one of us, always to pray and not to faint; and that under circumstances of all others that we can conceive most discouraging. When he had to drink that bitter cup of wrath which our sins had mingled, in the full acquaintance with the absolute necessity which there was for his so doing, that the whole intention of his coming was so to do, that all the salvation of the souls of men depended on his so doing, and the glory of God, his Father, in not passing it by, did he pray? Yes, he prays—"Father, if it be possible, remove this cup from me. Being in an agony, he prayed yet more earnestly." It was not for him, then, as man to reason, but to pray, and he was sure that prayer could not be in vain; and we are especially told, respecting this prayer on this occasion, he was heard, in short he prayed.

O may the Lord teach you and me, my brethren, to draw near, and "always to pray and not to faint." Amen.

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### SCRIPTURE DIFFICULTIES.

#### NO. VI.

Gen. ii. 5:—*And there was not a man to till the ground.*—This verse has, by some persons, been thought contradictory to chap. i. 27, where the creation of Adam has been already affirmed. The difficulty, however, results only from inattention to the scope of the two passages, with their respective contexts. The inspired historian first gives a general account of the whole creation, in six days; and then, carrying on his history, describes particularly the formation of Adam and Eve. In the third verse of this chapter it is said, that God had rested from all his work, which he had created and made, that is, he ceased to make any more creatures; therefore Adam was not made after this.

Ch. iii. 24:—*And he placed at the east*

of the garden of Eden cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.—The words here rendered, “a flaming sword turning every way,” are, literally, “a flame turning or folding upon itself.” The Jewish Targum paraphrase the verse thus: “And he thrust out the man, and caused the glory of his presence to dwell of old, at the east of the garden of Eden, above the two cherubims.” If such be the real import of the passage, says Bishop Horne, and it relates only to the manifestation of the divine presence, and its well known symbol, above or between the cherubim, may we not conclude that the design of such manifestation, at the east of the garden of Eden, was the same as it was confessedly afterwards in the tabernacle and temple: viz. to reveal the will of God for the conduct of his people; to accept the sacrifices offered to him; and favourably to regard the prefigurative atonement made by “the sprinkling of blood, without which there was (after the fall) no remission?” And all this was done “to keep, or preserve, the way to the tree of life,” immortality being now the object of a new covenant, with other conditions. There were good reasons, adds the excellent prelate, why our first parent should not be suffered, in the state to which he had reduced himself, to “put forth his hand and eat.” The dispensation of Eden was at an end. Old sacraments were abolished, and new ones were to be instituted. In the spirit of repentance and faith, the delinquents were to wait “till one happier man should regain the blissful seat,” and “open the kingdom of heaven to all believers;” himself the true tree of life in the paradise of God. Thus, this text, which has been so long the butt of infidels, and the stumbling-block of believers, not only becomes cleared of its difficulties, but throws a light and glory on the whole patriarchal dispensation.

Ch. iv. 7 :—*If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over*

*him.*—This passage of Scripture has exceedingly puzzled translators and critics, and that with reference to both of its clauses. In reply to the question, “why Cain’s sacrifice was not accepted as well as Abel’s?” the former part of the verse has been quoted, as if Cain had been an exceedingly wicked man. But the reason will be better understood by considering the nature of sacrifices, which were of two sorts, *eucharistical* and *expiatory*: the former consisting of the fruits of the earth, the latter of a living animal, the life of which God would accept, instead of that of the offender. Abel brought a sacrifice of atonement, acknowledging himself a sinner. Cain brought a sacrifice of thanksgiving, expecting to be accepted without repentance. The Almighty seems to expostulate thus with Cain: “Why art thou sorrowful? If thou wert so righteous as to need no atoning sacrifice, thou shouldst be accepted; as thou art not, sin will lay in the way, till thou hast removed it by an atoning sacrifice or sin-offering.” The concluding clause of the verse, “and unto thee shall be his desire,” is not spoken of sin, as many have understood it, but of Abel’s submission to Cain, as his superior; that is, “Thou shalt ever have the right of primogeniture, and in all things shall thy brother be subject unto thee.” It seems spoken to remove Cain’s envy.

Ver. 8 :—*And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, &c.*—The present reading of this text is much embarrassed. The Hebrew word, which our translators have rendered “talked,” will not bear this meaning: but, not finding any thing that was spoken on the occasion, they have ventured to intimate that there was a conversation indefinitely. In the most correct editions of the Hebrew Bible, there is a hiatus or deficiency marked, which is supplied in the principal ancient versions, and in the Samaritan text. According to these, the text reads clear and consistent, thus: “And Cain said unto Abel, his brother, Let us go out into the field; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up,” &c.

## SERMON XXVIII.

### THE ELEVENTH HOUR.\*

BY THE REV. JAMES PARSONS.

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“*The eleventh hour.*”—Matt. xx. 6.

THESE words occur in a memorable parable, pronounced by Him who spake as “never man spake.” It is to the following effect. “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place, and said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about *the eleventh hour* he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.” The subsequent part of the narrative states, that at the conclusion of the day, the labourers who had begun their work the last, received their reward the first; that their recompense was equal to the amount with which those were remunerated who had “borne the burden and heat of the day;” that against the discontent of the latter, the “goodman of the house” asserted his right to make his own distribution; and that the arrangement acted upon was unaltered and was final.

You will perceive, from the remark at

the close of the relation, that this parable was intended to illustrate the significant maxim which preceded it,—“Many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.” The specific principle to which both the maxim and the parable applied, was, that the Jews were not to be sole possessors of the promise of honour and everlasting life previously announced,—but that the Gentiles, who had long been alienated from God, were about to be visited by the tidings, and introduced to the blessings of mercy,—and that while the Jews, by their obdurate unbelief, were about to lose their national pre-eminence, and to be visited by desolating judgments, the Gentiles were to occupy their place in the aboundings of privilege, and to be admitted in innumerable multitudes to the felicities of the future world.

While stating this to be the primary object of the Saviour’s narrative, we cannot but observe, that circumstances connected with the lives and spiritual position of *individuals*, may be in some respects analogous to what it records, with this public and general view, respecting the labourers. To say that it applies directly and originally to individuals, and on that principle uniformly, and in every part, to expound it, would be a mistake by no means trivial; but still there seems no possible impropriety in founding upon it those remarks which are suggested by resemblances, and which, in themselves true and important, cannot be stated and urged without promoting the best interests of immortal souls. I now venture,

\* Addressed to the aged.

from the motto selected and read, to advance and enforce some remarks of this nature, the particular application of which will be to a class you will at once identify, when we name the following topics of our discourse:—That the time mentioned may represent an advanced period in human life,—that men are to be found in this period inattentive to the concerns of true religion,—that they who are found inattentive in this period are involved in peculiar perils,—and that divine grace sometimes displays itself, by making this period to be one of true and saving conversion. Let those on whom years have multiplied render to these remarks their most devout and serious regard; but let none be unconcerned or careless,—let all seek to deduce the improvement which may prepare them for their own eternity.

*First, THE TIME MENTIONED MAY REPRESENT AN ADVANCED PERIOD IN HUMAN LIFE.*

Amidst the numerous figurative representations of human life, it is frequently and appropriately compared to a *day*. When we single out one of those specific periods which are marked by the rising and setting of the sun, we find that there is presented to us a miniature resemblance of an entire existence. We are accustomed to speak of the morning of life, the meridian of life, the evening of life; the morning signifying the season of youth, when much of existence appears still unoccupied, and when there seems a constant unfolding and advance of the intellectual and corporeal powers; the meridian signifying the season of manhood, when nature is judged to have attained its perfection, and to be clothed in its highest glory; the evening signifying the season of age, when there is a regularly progressing decline, and when it is necessarily calculated that probation will soon terminate in the destiny of the grave. By this emblem, the general fact of the *brevity* of life is impressively illustrated. In application to that fact, David employed it, connected with another figure, in one of the most emphatic of the scriptural representations as to the state of man. “In the morning, they

are like grass which groweth up; in the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.” Sometimes life may appear to occupy extended dimensions,—yet the period will arrive when, by all, it will be considered *but* like a day,—so swift its flight, so ephemeral its duration, so intangible its events; when it will seem to shrink into a mere point; and when all its transactions shall be as if crowded into one of the very least measurements of chronology,—a whole existence being “but as *yesterday* when it is past.” O, it is of vast importance to admit and to improve the estimate!

In our arranged application of the phrase of the text, it will point us to the time when life is about to terminate. “The eleventh hour” is near the close of the day; the sun has far descended; the shadows of evening are rapidly diffusing and deepening, and prognosticate that shortly the season to which that hour belongs will be finished. Hence we are led to contemplate the case of persons, who are soon to be removed from the scenes of earth, and to go down to the abodes where “the light is as darkness.” Especially we have to consider, as being in this period, the *aged*,—those who have long passed the more active seasons of existence, who are fast fulfilling their “threescore years and ten,” or it may be are beyond them; and who now totter in the feebleness and decay which prove exhausted powers, and are a public proclamation of approaching death. They also are in this period, who, although perhaps the number of their years is comparatively few, have been paralyzed in the sinews of strength, and stripped of the resources of constitution, by the spoiling hand of early infirmity, and of whom it is plain that their “sun will go down while it is yet day.” And many may be in “the eleventh hour” who know it not;—they may be securely counting up, and reposing on, their reasons for expecting a long future continuance in this world, while death is standing by, and laughing at their arithmetic; and amidst their dreams of health and numerous enjoyments, the arm of the king of terrors

may be lifted, to strike and prostrate them as his victims.

“The eleventh hour,” the period in this manner illustrated, should never be viewed without heart-stirring emotion. Its position and connexion require that it should be seriously pondered by all men, whether far advanced in age, whether the subjects of premature decline, or whether rejoicing in imaginations of vigour and unshaken health. Not only does it portend a speedy separation from the associations and scenes of this visible world;—it is on the verge of another state; it is on the borders of the line which separates probation from doom; and adjoins the regions where Spirits dwell in retribution. Momentous is the change, when the little space beyond it is past. There then comes a summons from beyond the grave, which none can disobey. We go,—and at once there flashes upon us the light of judgment: we go,—and we gaze upon the peopled habitations of everlasting fate: we go,—and our hearts give up their secrets to the scrutiny of Jehovah: we go,—and the voice from the throne pronounces, in thrilling accents, the sentence of vengeance or reward: we go,—and we dwell where songs of happiness ring in their melody through the temple of the skies, or where the weeping and howlings of despair proclaim the terrors and torments of the damned!—How is it possible to view the approach and arrival of “the eleventh hour” with indifference? Ought not the thoughts of it to be frequent, and ought not every thought of it to be carefully improved? Will *you* not endeavour to apply it to the high emotions it requires? I now press the contemplation of it upon you, especially on those who have been heedless of its advance,—and cannot but express the wish of intense earnestness—“O that ye were wise, that ye understood this, that ye would consider your latter end!”

*Secondly, MEN ARE TO BE FOUND IN THIS PERIOD INATTENTIVE TO THE CONCERNS OF TRUE RELIGION.*

The fact of insensibility to religion, on the part of persons who have arrived at “the eleventh hour,” appears, at the first sight, singular and strange. Men

who have wellnigh passed the course of their earthly existence without having admitted the influences of religion, and who, in the solemn circumstances to which we have adverted, are still inconsiderate, unprepared, and endangered, can scarcely be contemplated without a fearful surprise. It might be expected, that with the progress of life there would be an augmenting anxiety respecting the method of its close; it might be expected, that with the increasingly distinct appearance of the final change, there would be more urgent and diligent preparation to meet it; it might be expected, that the members of a generation wellnigh passed away, would present a uniform and an instructive example of holy readiness for the moment of their departure, and that “The eleventh hour” would be one of devout waiting, the affections being disengaged from this world, and the whole soul absorbed in the anticipations of another. Such a state of mind would always obtain and govern, were the passions of men to be regulated by the prospect of their eternal award; the character would thus be adapted to the season, and the season would prelude the rising of immortal glory.

Yet how far different is the truth! How many have been found near the termination of the day, who have not entered, and who have not desired to enter, into the vineyard! There are multitudes who have traversed the career of time, and have come to the verge of eternity, in whose bosoms has arisen no serious concern for the well-being of that soul which so soon must be the inhabitant of heaven or of hell. You have yourselves seen persons perishing in premature disease, totally unimbued with the principles of piety, and averse to their proclamation, when the sentence of death was visibly stamped upon their brow. You have yourselves seen the infirm and aged, to whom the lease allowed for the tenure of existence has gone, of whom you could not believe that they had ever been animated to work for God, and seek for their own salvation. Painful and affecting is it to look upon the numerous remnants of a former time we see around us

tottering under the weight of accumulated years, and yet unborn to God. Long instruction has imparted no knowledge, and gray hairs have brought no wisdom. Opportunities have passed away, and appeals have died into the silence of forgetfulness,—all opportunities afforded, and all appeals uttered in vain. They stand, bleaching for the harvest of eternity, and already trembling for the sickle, barren and unfruitful; they stand, idle for the whole day of life, and already surrounded by the shadows, which deepen and blacken until they reach the palpable darkness of an everlasting midnight in hell.

In what manner is this mournful fact of inconsideration, at such a period, to be accounted for? The ultimate and complete explanation can alone be found, in referring to that depraved disinclination to attend to spiritual things, which forms a part in the present moral constitution of human nature, and which characterizes without exception every human being. From the earliest years we all dislike to recognise the claims of God, and the importance of eternity; and find our pleasure in indulging the passions, and resorting to the courses, inflexibly denounced by the divine law. We “love darkness rather than light.” “The carnal mind is enmity against God.” Now, all whom we observe closing their probationary state without religion, are persons in whom this sad hostility has been left to its unfettered course, and by long indulgence has fastened its unwavering hold. In their past experience, varieties not inconsiderable may be discovered: their education, and their connexions in life, may have been more or less favourable to spiritual knowledge and impression; their talents and privileges may have been unequally distributed:—but at the root, this grand evil is to be found,—as the poisoning principle, the source of all their fearful indifference; and we have to regard them in one appalling light—*the examples of continued and confirmed depravity.*

There are persons within the hearing of this address, far advanced in life, to whom applies the distressing charge, that they are now inattentive to the all-import-

ant realities of religion. Some of *you* “have not the knowledge of God; I speak this to your shame.” Your hearts have never yet been softened into contrition: you are yet going about to establish a righteousness of your own: you yet feel no need of Christ, and stand far apart from an interest in his atonement: you yet love the world and worldly things, and have no treasure but on earth: and were this moment to be your last, you would appear without a plea before the judgment-seat. And why is it? Tell us not of excuses and apologies for your long delay; think not to exonerate yourselves from guilt, and to prove that your course till now, may be accounted for by adequate and unexceptionable reasons,—I repeat it,—to nothing, after all, is your conduct to be traced, but to the wicked alienation of your minds from God. Whatever you may be able to state as disadvantages and obstacles which have attended your earlier career, you cannot avert or evade this affecting fact; and you *must* possess a thorough conviction of its truth, and become the subjects of all the feelings it can inspire, if you would escape the destroying wrath of the avenger. Can you say that you have not possessed abundant means of knowledge, and that you have not possessed many opportunities of turning to God, if you would? Can you say that this is the first time you have had any suggestions, as to the importance of salvation and the solemnities of eternity? Have conscience, providence, and religion been silent until now? O no—and you know it! Then let the delusion which attempts to conceal from you your real case be shaken off, and go, in profound self-abasement, to the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, as alone imparting security from the wrath to come. And let us all, whatever position we occupy in the term of life, seek for the blessing of grace, which shall conquer our natural corruption—that tremendous foe, and implant the principle of regenerated holiness; let us all piously breathe, and henceforth live in the practical spirit of the desire to Him from whom we derived our being, and who will ere long bring us to death,—“*So teach us to*

*number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom !”*

To enforce further the important application in view, remark—

*Thirdly, THEY WHO ARE FOUND INATTENTIVE IN THIS PERIOD, ARE INVOLVED IN PECULIAR PERILS.*

To exist without being influenced by personal religion, not exercising repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, is, in every case, to be in a state of alarming danger. Impenitence, at all periods of life, is under the direct condemnation of God; and, remembering the inflexibility of the divine justice, and those uncertainties attached to human existence which may so rapidly bring into contact with it, no transgressor of any age can be looked upon, but with anxiety, and fear, and trembling. Yet when we contemplate a sinner whose day is evidently waning towards its last moments, and who is yet in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity, we find circumstances connected with his condition, which justly excite a far greater intensity of solicitude. To those circumstances let us more distinctly advert.

The principal evil connected with transgressors of “the eleventh hour” is *the hardness of heart which prolonged inattention to religion has necessarily produced.* The continued indulgence of depravity always renders that depravity more decided and more inveterate. It is like the operation of the fluid, by which the softest substances become hardened into petrification. Every human being must, with the course of time, be the subject of a constant moral progression, advancing either in holiness or in sin. The indisposition to religion, and the unfitness for it, regularly augment with the lapse of opportunities and years. “A body dead some few hours,” observes an eminent divine,\* “is a subject more capable of having life breathed into it, than when it is putrefied, and partly mouldered to dust. A young tree may more easily be taken up and transplanted, than a strong old oak, which hath spread

its roots deep into the earth. The more rooted the habit of sin, the harder the alteration of the soul. Every sin in an unregenerate man is an adding a new stone to the former heap upon the grave, to hinder his resurrection. It is a fetter and a *bond of iniquity*; and the more new chains are put upon thee, the more unable wilt thou be to stir. Satan will be diligent to keep up his own work; the longer his possession, the more difficult his departure.”

Ministers of the gospel, and other pious men, have had constant occasion to observe the unquestionable truth of these solemn principles. They have been led to remark in coincidence with them, that much less impression is made upon the aged than upon the young; that the number of conversions in advanced life is comparatively few; that the warmest and most melting appeals are heard with imperturbable indifference; that while younger sinners have quailed and trembled, the gray in age and wickedness have been unmoved as the adamant; and that on every hand, the testimony of fact painfully corroborates the word of inspiration—“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” Is it strange, then, that they should regard you, ye ancient transgressors, with fearful and unequalled apprehension? Is it strange that, towards you, their exhortations should be more importunate, and their agency more impassioned? Well indeed may they labour with the most vehement energy of soul, to arouse you, and cause you to flee from the dangers of inattention in “the eleventh hour!”

Further, we have to remember *the hinderances arising from the pressure of bodily pain, or from the decay of the intellectual faculties.* Religious consideration is much and necessarily retarded by the inconveniences resulting from corporeal disease:—and how often is the closing period of existence a season of sore disease and anguish, when the mind can scarcely raise a thought away from the convulsions which are to accomplish the fall of the earthly tabernacle!—The diffi-

\* Charnock.

culties often resulting from the intellectual state of advanced age, are even more portentous. The powers of the mind, except in some singular and extraordinary cases, naturally lose a portion of their acuteness and activity, and have a greater reluctance to receive new ideas, and attempt arduous efforts. For this reason, as well as from the force of moral perversion, the great business of salvation is viewed with repugnance, and its very grandeur silently argues for its continued neglect and delay. There are many instances of rapid decline, when the grasp of the understanding not only slackens, but fails,—and the humbling and mournful imbecility of a second childhood suspends the exercise of memory and thought, and leaves man but a helpless and a desolate wreck. If these be the concomitants of age and sickness—can we estimate their palpable influence of spiritual opportunities, without perceiving their appalling dangers,—and must we not reiterate the fervent prayer, that God would save you at once from inattention in “the eleventh hour?”

In expounding this perilous state, we must also notice, *its inevitable and observable nearness to the miseries of the eternal world.* We have already mentioned the period with the interests of which we are now specially concerned, as being on the verge of another, and a retributive state; and because they who have reached it, are not prepared to enter that state for the enjoyment of acceptance and happiness, they have only the prospect of being overwhelmed in its unspeakable and irremediable sorrows. Behold, then, how fearful the spot of ground on which now they stand! The last promise of mercy is about to be hushed into silence. A brief space will put them for ever beyond the reach of grace and hope. The voice of the Judge is about to pronounce the sentence of his indignation. The flame of Tophet is already flashing upon them, and will soon enwrap them in the torment of its everlasting fire. Does no thrill of horror pass through your bosoms, as you gaze upon them? Do you not feel as if you wished to rush forward and snatch them away? Would you not cry

a loud alarm, and entreat them now to escape for their lives, lest they be consumed?—Endangered immortals! As in the sight of your retribution, we invoke you, without one moment's delay, to awake, and arise, and turn, lest the wrath should be upon you! Is it possible that any will yet remain unconcerned, when they look upon this climax of the peril of “the eleventh hour?”

Let us now in some degree relieve the awfulness with which our subject is invested, by remarking—

*Fourthly,* DIVINE GRACE SOMETIMES DISPLAYS ITSELF, BY MAKING THIS PERIOD TO BE ONE OF TRUE AND SAVING CONVERSION.

“The eleventh hour” may be the first of entering the vineyard. It is not for a moment to be imagined, that any circumstances of rational existence are beyond the reach of mercy, and are to be viewed with emotions of despair. We can resign the hope of salvation with respect to none: never can it be pronounced *too late.* All warnings of danger, and all expressions of fear, must be qualified by the delightful reflection, that God is able to render the very season of extreme peril, that in which may be seen the most illustrious operation of his arm in achieving the work of eternal redemption. Suppose not that there is no energy sufficient to produce, in practised and inveterate sinners, godly sorrow and repentance; and suppose not that when they do repent, their acceptance is doubtful, and their salvation may not be accomplished. Yea, we assure you, that if there be within your bosoms the stirrings of contrition,—no matter how heinous may have been your guilt, and no matter how protracted your inattention and delay,—you will find the grace of God to be abundant and ample: your long-continued iniquities will be forgiven; you will be fully introduced to the privileges of the glorious gospel, and be made heirs of eternal life; and when you shall have passed the darkness of the grave, there will arise upon you a sun whose light shall never go down, and which shall shed a changeless radiance over the scenes of immortality.

An example is sometimes the most forcible method of impressing a general truth; and a well-known and beautiful example is at once suggested here. The communication of mercy to the thief who was crucified with the Redeemer, well illustrates the principles just stated, and presents to you an encouragement most animating and delightful. His transgressions in former life had doubtless been numerous and atrocious, and even when suspended on the instrument of ignominious death, he had joined in reviling the Redeemer of the world. It was amid the very pangs of the expiring agony, and when his spirit was trembling on the verge of eternity, that he melted into the tenderness of penitence, and exercised the confidence of faith, and wrestled in the fervency of prayer; and then, when a few moments would have launched him into the realms of hopeless condemnation, he received the pledge of forgiveness, and the promise of being, ere that day had gone, in paradise with his Lord! It was a ransom in "the eleventh hour,"—it was a rescue from the borders of the pit. It is a pattern of the might of mercy,—a witness against the guilt of despair. Should despondency rest her heavy hand upon *you*, when the plague of the heart has been revealed,—think of the expiring malefactor; and learn, that no circumstances can be desperate,—and learn, that the bruised reed never shall be broken, and that the smoking flax never shall be quenched,—and learn, that the cry for pardon shall always enter into the holy place, and secure a triumphant entrance into heaven.

All saving conversions accomplished near the termination of life, are remarkable exhibitions of divine grace, which ought in no case to be overlooked. Such conversions manifest the *sovereignty* of grace. They show that spiritual blessings are communicated in a perfect independence of human merit, and are to be traced to no source but to the mere good pleasure of God. The long continued estrangement of the heart from them, and the consequent accumulation of iniquity, which impentence till "the eleventh hour" implies, place the grand evangeli-

cal truth in the strongest possible point of view—"I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and have mercy on whom I will have mercy." Again, such conversions manifest the *riches* of grace. They show the exceeding greatness of the power which dwells in pardoning kindness. What limitless efficacy must there be in that which in a moment can change the current of the affections, and effect the absolute moral transformation of the nature,—which can blot out the guilt of numberless transgressions, remit the condemnation of the law, and grant to the soul the favour of the living God, and the title to a glorious eternity! Every act of renovation like these, is a special display of the boundlessness of redeeming love, and magnifies, and confers fresh honour on Him who is "able to save to the uttermost."

Around persons converted in this period, there gathers a transcendent interest; we cannot look upon them without a high excitement of feeling. Each age of life possesses an interest peculiar to itself. There is an interest attached to the conversion of early youth, which belongs not to meridian manhood, or to old age; there is an interest attached to the conversion of meridian manhood, which belongs not to old age, or to early youth; and there is an interest attached to the conversion of old age, which belongs not to early youth, or to meridian manhood. Circumstances will doubtless suggest themselves rapidly to the contemplative mind, inducing to regard the converts of "the eleventh hour" with emotions beyond what can be inspired by the view of those who are sooner born of God. The mariner saved from the wreck as the vessel is dashing upon the rock, is surely the subject of a deliverance more affecting, than he who escapes ere it enters amidst the foam of the breakers. And can there be, in the universe, any case approaching to theirs, whose souls are saved when on the very point of sinking to perdition, and who become illumined with the glories of heaven, while there was rapidly gathering around them the outer darkness of the abyss? In their age they shine forth as the morning! At

eventide it is light! Their light rises in obscurity, and their darkness is as the noonday! Is not the event of incomparable sublimity, and must it not absorb the soul of the observer in admiration and in praise?

And how greatly ought they, for whom, in the circumstances of peril, this wondrous deliverance has been effected, *themselves* to rejoice in it! and what fervent gratitude ought they to render to Him who wrought it! Let them, ere they depart from the abodes of living men, be diligent in redeeming the time,—let them cultivate, during the little remnant of their probation, the very highest devotedness of piety,—let them live only, that they may show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light. Earnest indeed should *they* be, in rendering honour to their God, ere another world receives them to its glories!

In concluding the statements and exhortations arising from the view of “the eleventh hour,” little now needs to be added. The discourse has already applied itself. I have but to ask—Can the aged, who have been till now unconverted, consider the momentous truths which have been pressed upon their attention,—and yet depart from the sanctuary unmoved? Is it possible they can be told of the appalling dangers that surround them, and of the only refuge that can save them, in vain? Ye hoary sinners! remember, I repeat, that if the word bring you not to repentance, all its urgency will but increase the obduracy of your hearts, and be emphatically “the savour of death unto death.” The next appeal will find you still further from God, and still nearer to damnation. The *next* appeal? O this may be the last that shall ever reach your ears! The decisive change may be close at hand. Even now the grasp of death may be upon you. Even now, mercy may be uttering her farewell,—when gone, to return no more for ever. And shall she go,—and shall the doom be sealed? O God, avert it! May the arm of thine omnipotence now be stretched forth, and pluck them as brands out of the fire!

“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God,” alike for the aged and the young, is, that *at once* they may repent and turn to Him, so that the possibility of their final condemnation may exist no more. Whether you be obscured amidst the shadows of “the eleventh hour,” or whether there be upon you the bloom and growing splendours of the morning, *now* “yield yourselves unto God.” Thus, to live will be Christ, and to die will be gain; and when the judgment of the great day shall have accomplished its transactions, we shall unite, clothed with immortal vigour, in celebrating the praises of grace,—happy for ever and ever.

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#### VISITING THE SICK.

Two of my parishioners, a man and his wife, lay at the point of death. I had heard of the circumstance; but according to my general custom, not being sent for, I took no notice of it; till one evening, the woman being now dead, and the man dying, I heard that my neighbour Mr. N—— had been several times to visit them. Immediately my conscience reproached me with being shamefully negligent, in sitting at home, within a few doors of dying persons, my general hearers, and never going to visit them. Directly it occurred to me, that whatever contempt I might have for Mr. N.’s doctrines, I must acknowledge his *practice* to be more consistent with the ministerial character than my own. He must have more zeal and love for souls than I had, or he would not have walked so far to visit, and supply my lack of care to those who, so far as I was concerned, might have been left to perish in their sins. This reflection affected me so much, that without delay, and very earnestly, yea with tears, I besought the Lord to forgive my past neglect; and I resolved thenceforth to be more attentive to this duty; which resolution I have, by divine grace, been enabled hitherto to keep. I went immediately to visit the survivor, and the affecting sight of one person already dead, and another expiring in the same chamber, served more deeply to impress my serious convictions.—*T. Scott.*

## SERMON XXIX.

NO TEMPLE IN HEAVEN.

BY THE REV. W. JAY, A.M.

AT THE REOPENING OF TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD CHAPEL.

—◆—  
“*And I saw no temple therein ; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.*”—  
Rev. xxi. 22.

My brethren, this sublime but mysterious book may be regarded in two ways. The first is, by studying the whole series of prophecy which it contains, concerning the church to the end of the world; and the other is, to attend to particular passages. The former of these we are compelled to decline; we are afraid to venture our feeble bark on an ocean so deep and so terrible. We do not, indeed, go so far as the witty and satirical Dr. South, and some who say, “the book of Revelations always finds a man mad, or leaves him so;” but we have known some wise men, and some men certainly not very wise, who have employed much of their time and attention upon it to very little purpose, unless to draw away the mind from the one thing needful, and to gender strife and self-conceit. Some of these interpreters have outlived their own empty schemes, and have been ashamed of their confidence; and the schemes of others in succession will equally evince that “there is no prophet among us, nor any thing that telleth how God is.”

There were babblers in prophecy before the death of Fuller; that great man called them “the fortune-tellers” of the church. However this may be, we know that our Saviour in more than one instance said, “These things have I spoken unto you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass ye may believe.” The benefit of prophecy is principally deriva-

ble from the fulfilment of it; and in all ages God has so accomplished his own predictions, as to show how very little we can previously conjecture with accuracy, and to prove “that his ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts; but as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts.”

But then there are particular passages here, which, like the heavenly luminaries, shine the more brightly from the surrounding darkness. This is the case in the address to the seven churches, with the representation of the person and glory of the Redeemer, and the accounts of the heavenly world. To some countries we feel comparatively indifferent, because we have little connexion with them; but if there was a country in which we had large possessions, many endearing relations, and where, after a while, we were to reside, not for a season, but for life, we should be glad of a map, and be thankful for any particular instructions.

Such is heaven to all the heirs of glory; but what is heaven here? It is here represented as glorious; and John after surveying the gates, and the wall, and the foundation, and the extent—that is, having surveyed it externally, he looks within; but what he there remarks is rather of a negative kind; for, according to our present state, and according to our present experience, we know what heaven is much more by what it is not, than by

what it is. Two things—two kinds of things rather, he found wanting there; first, evil things. There was no night—no death—no sorrow—no pain—all tears (here we have enough of these) were wiped from the eyes, and all these former things were passed away. But there were also good things wanting there, and things which now seem very desirable and necessary. Light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun; but “the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it.” Where is the believer who does not now say, “I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth?” But “I saw no temple there,” says John. What a world must it be where as to nature the sun can be dispensed with—where as to grace, the temple can be dispensed with! How little of this state do we now know! How little can we know while we are here! “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

On such an occasion as this, you may, perhaps, think it strange that I have chosen such a subject, a subject that leads me not to speak of the importance and excellency of religion, but its annihilation—not of the observation of the Sabbath, but of its abolition—not of the value of the temple, but of the state where temples will be no more; but I beseech you to hear me patiently while I endeavour to show,

*Firstly, THAT THERE IS NO TEMPLE IN HELL.*

*Secondly, THAT THERE IS NO TEMPLE IN HEAVEN.*

*Thirdly, THAT THERE ARE TEMPLES ON EARTH WHICH DESERVE OUR ATTACHMENT AND OUR RESPECT; and*

*Fourthly, THAT WE ARE ASSEMBLED TOGETHER THIS MORNING IN A TEMPLE WHICH HAS PECULIAR CLAIMS UPON THE AUDIENCE BEFORE ME.*

O Lord, touch with a living coal the lips of him who shall proclaim thy word, and bid each hearer give attention.

And, *First, my dear hearers, THERE IS NO TEMPLE IN HELL.*

*There is none to the devil.* Here he has innumerable followers, and the Scriptures call him not only the “prince of this world,” to show that they are his subjects, but “the god of this world” to show that they are his worshippers. He has his cause here, his followers, his ministers, his chaplains, (for Taylor is not the only one,) he has his scriptures, his ordinances; and there are days set apart for his honour, and places of worship open for his name. All that is in the world, “the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life,” all these are so many homages to him; and every sin is a giving place to the devil and giving praise to him too. For now he transforms himself into an angel of light, and his people are taken captive by him at his will. But this will not always be the case, this will not be the case long; they will soon see him as he is; they will see what a wretch—a cursed wretch they have been serving here—how he has deceived them—how he has destroyed them, and after having been their tempter, proving only their tormentor; and therefore the Scriptures say, “They shall look up and curse their god and their king.”

*None to God there.* In some respects it would be unnecessary. Now, we have preachers, and we find it no easy thing to convince you of the evil of sin and the wrath to come; for sin is deceitful, and this wrath is future and invisible, but hereafter such labour will be unnecessary. You will “walk not by faith—but by sight”—you will see and you will feel the truth of all we now endeavour to induce you to believe. Then the threatening will be fulfilled—then it will be said, “the end is come, the end is come,” the insulting question will be addressed to your conscience, “what fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?”

There will be, therefore, in hell a recitude of conception; but though you will be conscious of your desert, and acknowledge that God is justified when he speaketh, and clear when he judgeth, yet it will be the mere conviction of the conscience, and being unaccompanied with

any degree of hope, no penitence will flow from it, no adoration, no love to God, and no love to your fellow sufferers, no union with them. Here, there were confederacies among them which looked like friendship, but there all will be hateful, hating one another; not only sorrow, but mutual accusations and railings; there will not only be weeping and wailing, but gnashing of teeth.

But, my dear hearers, here you have the means of grace, and though now you are afar off, you may be made nigh; while you are in the land of the living you are in the land of hope; and O that you may know "the things that belong to your peace now, for then, they will be hid from your eyes." O that the long-suffering of God may be your salvation. O that the goodness of your God may lead you to repentance now; for there will be no calls to repentance there, no space for repentance there, no mercy-seat there, no throne of grace there, no herald to proclaim, "behold the Lamb of God," no Saviour to say, "look unto me and be saved, all the ends of the earth." You now mingle with the godly much, you join with them in their social exercises—you pass much of your time in the solemn temple; but there will be no temple there; no, there will be no temple there.

And it would be well, if when you have nothing more to do with these things in the way of privilege, you should have no more to do with them in the way of punishment. But this will not be the case. You will be detached from all the appendages of godliness, unless, indeed, from the remembrance of them. This will adhere to you for ever; and a vivid recollection of the desks here, and the pulpit, and the figure of the preacher, and what from time to time you have heard—these will serve as fuel to the fire that never will be quenched, and as food for the worm that never dies. Now you attend us on the Sabbath, and plunge into the dissipation of the week; and think no more on the subject; but how will you weather an eternal life, where such expedients fail? Now you can easily forget sermons, (how many have some of you forgotten?) but there

all will revive in your memory, and remain fresh in it for ever. A city young man some time ago when he was dying in the country said, "O! my father often told me that the conscience reproached when it did not speak, and I now find it to be true; and what is it now spread before me to peruse, but a roll written within and without with lamentation, and mourning, and wo?"

But I hasten from this part of our subject, to observe, *Secondly*, THAT THERE IS NO TEMPLE IN HEAVEN.

First, *There is no idol temple there.* Idolatry very soon entered our world, and there were "gods many, and lords many." In the absence of revelation, it is hardly to be wondered at, that the heavenly bodies, especially such a useful creature as the sun, should have been worshipped. But gods were made out of human beings, and generally made, not for their moral virtues, but at best for some physical qualities, and often, for even their passions and their vices; and they "changed the glory of the incorruptible body, to an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things;" and made gods out of the works of their own hands, and thus they mocked the Owner; the Upholder of all things, from age to age, was pushed aside from his own works, and saw his glories given to another. And how long has this custom continued? How wide has it spread? How many of these temples to devils and not to God—O eternal infamy! are there now standing, found even under our own dominion, to some of which thousands annually repair, in the service of which thousands are destroyed, the taxes of whose worshippers are collected by British officers, the income arising from which, after the expenses of Juggernaut and other devils are defrayed, goes to the support of the British government in the East!

Then, again, *There is no temple there for heresy and error.* How many Mahometan temples are there now, where Jesus the Son of God is placed below the false prophet! How many anti-christian temples are there now, in which

"the man of sin," (I use the word of revelation) "the son of perdition, exalteth and opposeth himself to all that is called God; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself to be God!" How many temples are there, where the Lord of glory and he whom all the angels of heaven adore, is degraded to the level of a mere creature and a mere man, and where his precious atonement which put away sin, which finished transgression, which brought in everlasting righteousness, is considered as the grossest corruption of Christianity! How many temples are there now, where men are made to be their own saviours, where they are expressly taught to go about to establish their own righteousness, instead of submitting themselves to the righteousness which is of God! And there are temples, where people are told that sin cannot hurt a believer, where sanctification as much as justification is a business merely of imputation—where ungodly men (for the Scriptures use no ceremony here, but call them by their own proper name, ungodly men) turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness. O what a blessed power, when through all the compass of Immanuel's land, there will not be one of such temples found—and how blessed, when in the approach to it, the Lord shall be king over all the earth, and in that day there shall be one Lord, and his name Wonderful.

Again, Thirdly, *There is no party temple there.* Now, even the followers of Christ cannot see eye to eye. Well, "let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind." As population increases, of course, temples will be necessarily multiplied. There is no harm in this, provided they will love each other and co-operate; but alas! we frequently find altar erected against altar, and the bigotry of the attendants leading them to exclaim, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we!" Hence, frequently those who worship the same God through the same Mediator, and by the influence of the same Spirit, live estranged from each other as if they did not belong to the same community; and in some cases where there is an accordance in doctrine

and in discipline, and where there is only a difference with regard to the mode of the administration of an ordinance, the gift of sprinkling for instance, they cannot live in peace, nor be able to commemorate the dying love of Jesus at the same table. Really, one would sometimes imagine, that each denomination expected that hereafter there would be a party temple of their own, into which all would submissively rest; but they are mistaken, all these differences will then be done away, and we shall be surprised, and if grief could enter heaven, we should be grieved, that we have attached ourselves so exclusively to our distinctions here. When the corn is carried home to the same garner, no inquiry is made whether it grew in this field or that field before the harvest. Children may differ in age, in size, in dress, and in schooling, but they are all one family. Do we believe this? Do we believe that the perfection of the future state is such, that there will be no party temple there. My dear hearers, you never find in the Scriptures such a command as this, "Take heed where you learn," though you read, "take heed what you hear," and "take heed how you hear." You will not hereafter have the question addressed to you, where did you worship? but, whether you have worshipped the Father in spirit and in truth. But is this true? Will there be no party temple there? Do we believe this? Do we believe that the perfections of heaven arise from him? Surely it is desirable to approach as nearly to that state now, in disposition, as possible. O I shall be saved, not as a member of a particular church, but as a member of the church universal! I feel myself a thousand times more dignified and honoured by the name of a Christian, which comprehends us all, than I should by the name of an Episcopalian, a Dissenter, an Independent, a Baptist, or a Methodist.

Finally, *There will be no material temple there.* The reason is, because they will be unnecessary. They are now in the order of means, and then the end will be accomplished. You will observe, that if the things which are in the order of means are continued in any case, the con-

tinuance implies their imperfection, or at least, that they have not so far answered their purpose. For example now, if the mediation of Christ continued after the day of judgment, it would be a proof that it had not previously fully accomplished all its purposes; but it will have fully accomplished all its purposes, and, therefore, the kingdom will be delivered up to God the Father, and God will be all in all. The Jewish sacrifices were repeated from year to year, because, says the apostle, "they could not make the comers thereunto perfect, for otherwise they would cease to be offered." So it was with the Jewish types, they were abolished by the arrival of the reality, just as the dawn is abolished by the coming of the perfect day. We may observe the same with regard to the Lord's supper; he now says, "Do this in remembrance of me;" because he is absent we are liable to forget him, and it is of vast importance that he should live in our thoughts. But this will not be the case when we are present with him, and for ever with the Lord. The order of the means is now established for the work of the ministry; but when there is no sinner to be converted, no saint to be edified, the work itself will cease with its object. There will be no need of an army when the enemies which we see to-day we shall see no more for ever—no need of prayer when we are filled with all the fullness of God—no need of patience when we are no longer required to suffer on the way—no need of faith when we see—no need of hope when we enjoy. There will be no charity there, for there will be no penury—there will be no mercy there, for there will be no misery. All duration will be one perpetual Sabbath, and all space one temple.

But we observe in the *third place*, THAT NOW THERE ARE TEMPLES ON EARTH WHICH DESERVE OUR ATTACHMENT AND OUR RESPECT.

In the determination of the regard which is due to them we are liable to err, both on the side of excess and deficiency, and, therefore, we shall now have to assail formality on the one hand and enthusiasm on the other. It is possible for us to err now on the side of ex-

cess; we may even overrate our present temples. We do this whenever we forget that their institutions and services are not to be regarded for their own sake—they are not ends, but means—they are not religion, but the instrumentalities of religion, and these temples, therefore, are not in all respects essential to religion even here. We read of no temple in the world before the flood, though we do read that men began to call on the name of the Lord in the family of Seth. Adam and Eve had no temple in paradise, and Milton beautifully represents them as always performing their morning and evening devotions in the open air. Isaac went out into the field at evening tide to meditate. And all through the book of Genesis, though you constantly read of offerings, you never read of the temple. The tabernacle indeed was a temple, but it was for the ark and not for the people; they worshipped in the outward court with no covering over them. But you say Solomon built him a house; but God said it was more than he expected or wished, and that he never said any thing of the kind from the beginning to any of his servants. And this temple too, after a time, was profaned and consumed. And during seventy years, while the Jews were in Babylon, they had no temple or synagogue, though there were many men peculiarly pious, as we see in the case of Daniel, and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and Ezra, and Nehemiah, and Joshua, and Zerubbabel and others. The first Christians, towards the close of the third century, had no temple, properly so called, but they worshipped wherever they could obtain accommodation; they never attached holiness to walls, and to mortar, and to timber. The Arian emperor established Arianism, and then the godly said to them, "You have the temples, but we have the truth." If we come down to our forefathers,—O how we revere their memories! O ye men of God, we continue to repair to your tombs, and when the letters begin to be erased, we inscribe them afresh, and say, "of whom the world was not worthy,"—when they were banished, not only from their homes, but from their temples, how was it with

them? They assembled in corners, private rooms, and in woods—unconsecrated? No; they were consecrated by their presence, or rather by the presence of their Lord and Saviour, who had said, "Where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst of them." Yes, and you make too much of temples now when you think of confining God to them. "The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands," saith the prophet, "heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me," saith the Lord, "or what is the place of my rest?"

If Christians are called to travel on the Sabbath, not at the beck of pleasure, but of duty—if they are placed by Providence in a soil of barrenness—if by accident, or disease, or relative distress, they are confined and are unable to repair to the sanctuary of God, then he will make them know that though they cannot follow him he will follow them. Then he will turn the bed, or the sick chamber, or the house of mourning, into none other but the house of God and the gate of heaven, and convince them that,

"Whene'er we seek him he is found,  
And every place is holy ground."

And Mr. Newton has very properly observed, that when Christians are deprived of the public means of grace, they should remember that they are still in the possession of three things, the throne of grace, the word of grace, and the spirit of grace. You also err on this side, when you repair to the house of God without seeking the God of the house, or depend upon the influence of his holy and blessed Spirit; for he will assuredly convince you that there is one greater than the temple, and that though Paul may plant and Apollos may water, he alone can give the increase.

But we are more likely to err on the side of deficiency than excess; and, therefore, having opposed formality which rests in temples, we must assail enthusiasm that would rise above them, and despise them. Things that are not necessary in eternity, are important and necessary here. Hereafter we shall live

without food and without sleep. What should we think of a man who could become spiritual enough to despise these vulgarities now, and to think he could live without them? What shall we do here? Shall we appeal to the divine presence—to him who knows what is in man, and what is necessary for him? What does he say? What is his command? "Forsake not the assembling yourselves together as the manner of some is." "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, for all these things have I required of the house of Israel;" and what say his promises? "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." "I will make the place of my feet glorious." "I will bring them to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer, for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people." Or shall we appeal to reason with regard to the actual state of man? Let us with much brevity take six views of man, each of which will show, though our temples are to be dispensed with hereafter, yet they are important and necessary now.

Let us view man *physically*—let us look at the constitution of his nature. It was reserved for the philosophers of our own times, to prove that the possessions of the most enlarged mind are, from ideas originally admitted through the medium of the senses, or from contemplating the portion of our own minds employed on the ideas of sensation. And what reason in the world have we to suppose that religion will not operate in the same way, and derive benefit from external things? God, who from the beginning knew, God has acted all along upon the truth of Locke's principle, he addresses us chiefly in his word by facts. The apostles spoke of those things which they had seen, and heard, and handled, of the good word of life. All the observations of Christianity are founded on facts which instruct and impress us entirely through the medium of sensation and reflection. Preaching is an address to the ear. The Lord's supper is an address to the eye. "Before your eyes," says the apostle, "Jesus

Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you." Or, rather it is an address even to the taste, "Eat ye all of this; drink ye all of this." But here you see the God of grace not renouncing, but acknowledging the God of nature.

Secondly, Let us view man as an *immortal being*, who has deep wants and mysterious cravings which distinguish him from all the orders of inferior creatures surrounding him, the subject of hopes and fears which nothing earthly can remove or satisfy. It is only the institution of religion that can meet these hungerings of a strayed immortal, and that can introduce a voice, saying, "Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

Then, thirdly, view man as a *depraved being*. Who can deny this? But what is the inference? If he be ignorant, he needs to be instructed—if he be wandering, he needs to be reclaimed—if he be careless, he requires to be aroused—if he be averse to duty, he stands in need of every address and motive that can excite and influence him. Can religion be safely left to the choice and disposition of such a being as this—every man to be his own priest? Why, what kind of ministry would such a being as this be enabled or disposed to exercise? No, Christianity is like its Author, it goes and seeks that which is lost; it goes after the strayed sheep in the wilderness until it find him.

Then, fourthly, view man as a *renewed being*. Thus he is made to differ from others, and to differ from himself; but though he be a changed creature now, he is an imperfect one. He is surrounded with numberless diversions and temptations—he abounds with much evil within. Religion is planted in him, but then it is an exotic, and it is a very tender one. Can religion be kept lovely and flourishing in the soul without aid—constant

aid? Is it to be maintained from something innate only? Can its principles be sustained, sufficiently sustained, by abstract reflection and occasional reflection? Do they not require something substantial, something fixed, something frequently returning to realize and to invigorate them? And are not habits alone formed by the repetition of particular acts? Christians, therefore, are always thankful for such ordinances to remind them—to restrain them—to stimulate them—to refresh them—to comfort them. They are even thankful that what is their privilege is made by God himself their duty, and that they are bound to wait upon the Lord, because they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. Whatever reason some may assign for their giving up the Sabbath and the sanctuary, be assured of this, that when these are given up in a general way, all is given up practically or gradually. You will find the private duties of religion always best discharged by those who attend to public ones; for it is an undeniable fact, that one duty aids the principle and the disposition of another duty; and, therefore, not only does the neglect of ordinances tend to evil, but it implies evil. It shows already the danger of alienation from the life of God in the soul. And, I beseech you now to observe this, that with regard to those Christians whose attainments in religion are such, as to seem to place them above ordinances, they are the individuals that always prize them most, and always attend upon them the most constantly. It was Ezra that said, "I beseech thee, give us a nail in thy holy place." It was David that said, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord"—a man after God's own heart—a man who had more experimental religion than any individual, perhaps, before the coming of our Saviour. And by the way, be it remembered too, that he was not a recluse; he was the hero of the day, he was the first general of the age, the first statesman, the first musician, the first poet. This was the man who said, "A day in thy courts is

better than a thousand;" "I would rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness."

Then, fifthly, view man *in his civil being*. But here you will meet with him among the ranks and degrees of life, and these ranks and degrees of life are proper. The Scriptures enforce attention to this; no advantage is ever derived from the violation of this. But then it will be acknowledged that they may become excessive and injurious; and I would ask what there is that can check them, and sanctify them like public worship, where the rich and the poor meet together—where, without any injury to the decencies and decorums of life, all can mingle in the same company—all can sit down at the very same table—where the peasant is dignified without any degree of pride—where the master feels himself to be only a servant—where the king feels himself to be only a subject—where the judge descends from his awful tribunal, and, kneeling by the side of other criminals, cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Lastly, *Let us view man publicly in his connexion with the state, for whose safety, and for whose welfare, he ought to be concerned*. Now, if religion be essential to the safety and welfare of a country, we contend that these institutions and observances are essential to religion. And we would ask, What would any nation, what would any neighbourhood be, if the Sabbath and if our temples were given up? How rude! how savage! how insubordinate! how insulting! are found those in the different parts of the country that are brought up much away from the influence of the means of grace? There are no persons but have occasional religious excitements, and is it not desirable that these periods should be seized and improved? Even a bad man will frequently feel a temporary conviction; and in such a place as this, that conviction may be confirmed, and become a principle. Persons may enter the house of God in affliction; but, though they first repaired to it as an asylum, they may afterwards continue there as adorers in the sanctuary.

How many there are, humanly speaking, who would never have been struck by divine truth, had they not, from curiosity, we will suppose, entered the house of God! Here is one—he comes and stands in the aisle, and he gives a leering side-look to the preacher. He seems, at first, careless; but he soon feels, and he soon blushes; for the preacher seems acquainted with him, and he seems known of all, and adjudged of all. He goes home reproaching the minister, and saying, "If men have faults, they should be reprov'd in private, and not before a whole assembly: I will never enter that place again"—not knowing what he says. The Sabbath comes round, he walks to the door, and affects a kind of contempt for the place; but he does not really feel one. He steps back; he comes just within the doors; he hears again, is more impressed, and more alarmed; and now the danger is, lest he should say, There is no hope! and lest despair should sink him to an unregenerate state. But he enters again; and the minister who has shown him his disease, shows him also the remedy; and he is made to know the truth, and the truth sets him free, and he walks in the glorious liberty of the sons of God. And this is not all. Many of these things have occurred under our own observation; but when a man gains good in such a place as this, he carries it away; he diffuses it; it is multiplied. Let us suppose a case, and the substance of it has actually passed under the preacher's own observation more than once. A villager passes a Sabbath in the city, and by some circumstance he is induced to attend where the gospel is preached; he hears to purpose; he goes back impress'd with other views and feelings than those with which he came. At first, his wife is alarmed, lest he should be beside himself; but she soon finds that he is a better husband, that he acts conscientiously and consistently; that he now begins to treat her with tenderness and affection; that, instead of spending his evenings abroad, he loves to spend them at home; and she often sees him after his labour with

a Bible spread on his knees, and sees his sleeve often wipe away many round tears. And now also he begins to love his children, and he is concerned to "train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." But he cannot confine his religion to himself or his family; he looks at the state of his neighbourhood, and is affected with the condition of his fellow creatures there. He speaks with them in conversation according as he has opportunity or ability. But he goes back to the minister who was the means of awakening him, and says to him, "Sir, you do not know me, but, blessed be God, I know you." And weeping and relating his experience, he says, "Now, that I have tasted that the Lord is gracious, I am concerned that others should taste and see that the Lord is good. O sir, if you did but know the state of our neighbourhood, you would come over and help us." He goes—he preaches to a few—they are impressed—he goes again—he preaches to more—by and by they are enabled and encouraged to build a place of worship—a church is formed there, and a considerable congregation; and thus the single grain that was dropped there springs up and brings forth fruit, in some thirty, in some sixty, and in some a hundred fold.

I am afraid I have been too long here; and yet it seems to me I have been very brief on this important part of our subject. But I hope this will be sufficient to convince you that we cannot part with our temples yet; and, if they are to be dispensed with in another world, yet they are now every way important and necessary, even politically important; and, therefore, that the Jews well understood the thing when they said of the centurion, "He loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue."

We will, therefore, pass, *fourthly*, to observe, THAT WE ARE NOW ASSEMBLED IN A TEMPLE THAT HAS PECULIAR CLAIMS UPON THIS AUDIENCE.

And the first of these will be derived from the character of the illustrious founder.\* Whenever a man is called to do the great work of God in our

\* Rev. G. Whitfield.

world, he must be a reformer and a re-prover. He will have to oppose reigning errors, and follies, and vices; he will, therefore, become a disturber and a troubler, and, therefore, he is likely to draw upon himself reflection and reproach; and sometimes with many, and for a length of time, he will lie under misrepresentation, but by and by his character breaks forth through the obscurity; "his righteousness is brought forth as the light, and his judgment as the noonday."

Some are born for a family, some for particular places and periods, some for all places and all periods. His name is now embalmed in many a country; but, O! what did he in his own? What was the state of religion, when he, with others whose hearts God had touched, sprung up? While the establishment, they were sleeping in the dark—while the dissenters, they were sleeping in the light! He was the main instrument of awakening them both, and of commencing a revival of evangelical religion, which continues still; and, notwithstanding the croakings of some, is increasing, and will continue to increase and spread till the "earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Illustrious and dear founder of this temple! it would be vain and presumptuous in me to think of adding any thing to thy fame! Thou hast long ago heard from angels, and the Judge of all, "Well done, good and faithful servant of God, well done!"

But here is another claim which this place has upon you; *it arises from its usefulness*. This, it is impossible for us to calculate; it will only be known at the last day. But you must reflect on the largeness of the place—you must reflect on the number of years that it has been opened—you must reflect on the multitudes who have attended here from time to time—you must reflect on the immensity of sermons that have been preached here, the services that have been performed here—you must reflect on the number of eminent servants of God of every denomination, of every grace, and every kind of talent, (O! how many could be named; but their names are in the book of life!) who have here preached the

gospel in its purity and its power. You must think how many have become teachers and ministers themselves, after they were called here; you must think what a number of persons have been converted here from the beginning. When God shall count up his jewels, of how many will it be said, "this and that man were born here!" Yes, and the Highest himself shall establish it.

Perhaps there is hardly a place here where some good has not been accomplished. Perhaps there are some here this morning who can point to a place and say, "There my stupid conscience was awakened to the inquiry—what must I do to be saved?" another would say, "Here my self-righteous hopes were all removed, and I was laid bare at the foot of the cross." Another would say, "How often here have I been instructed, comforted, and quickened!" How many would look to the communion table and say, "How often has he there been known of me in the breaking of bread." How many would say, "I have had numberless afflictions, but I have found him here in his palace for a rest, here he has been the Father of the fatherless, and the Judge of the widow, in his holy habitation."

There is another claim; and this is derived from the relation many of you have to the hallowed remains that lie interred here. You cannot say, my Christian brethren, with the Jews of old, "Our holy and beautiful house in which our fathers worshipped is burned up with fire; and all our pleasant things are laid waste." But you can say, Here our fathers worshipped thee. Here our dear friends, with whom we took sweet counsel together, and went to the house of God in company—they are gone, their souls are gone—gone to join the spirits of just men made perfect. But—

The saints below, and all the dead  
But one communion make;  
All join with Christ their living head,  
And of his grace partake.

They are gone, but their bodies lie near you in the neighbouring vaults; and let persons of hardened minds despise the thought that an importance or endear-

ment can be derived from such a quarter as this. The sentiment is natural to us; it was felt by the patriarchs; it was felt by the dying Jacob. "In the cave," says he, "that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron, the Hittite, for a possession of a burying-place. There they buried Abraham, and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac, and Rebecca his wife; and there I buried Leah." Are there not persons who say these things, and, in saying them, feel a tender and solemn connexion arising from hence? There lies my beloved child—there lies my beloved friend, who was as my own son—there lies the minister by whose labours my feet were turned into the path of peace—there lies a mother whose lips first taught me to pronounce the Redeemer's name, and in consequence of this we will not forsake the house of our God.

But there is one more claim, and that is derived from the future. As to some of you, you will not want the temple long. "Now is your salvation nearer than when you believed. The night is far spent, and the day is at hand." Yes; and as to others, how soon may they be removed! You have taken places, and you consider them as your own; but O! how soon may they be found vacant, and "the place that once knew you shall know you no more for ever!" And at most with regard to any of you, you will only occupy your places for a few years, and when those few years will come, then you will go that way whence you shall not return. But here are your families; and they are the hopes of our churches. My dear hearers, reflect this morning that here your children, and your children's children, will be serving him when the clods of the valley are soft about you, and so "a seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted unto the Lord for a generation. They shall come and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this."

These are the claims that this place has upon you—for what? For a regular

and constant attendance here, for your improvement of the means of grace, that your meeting together may be for the better and not for the worse; that your profiting may appear unto all men. Why, that you may endeavour to bring others here, that God's house may be filled with inhabitants—that his table may be filled with guests. Why, that you should render a liberal aid in the support of the administration of divine things here. Why—and with this I must close—that you should aid in discharging the debt that has been incurred by the purchase and repairs of this place.

Christians are stewards, and it becomes stewards to be found faithful, and it always looks suspicious when stewards grow very rich—when they dress very fine—when they live very fine, and die very rich. In our day I make no scruple to say that it is disgraceful for a Christian to die very rich. We allow that a Christian is to provide for his own house, but conscience will soon adjust this business; and we say again, that it is uncomely, and especially in such a day as ours, for the professors of religion to die very rich. I wish all our ministers would enter into an agreement never to preach a funeral sermon for a man that dies so ingloriously; or, if they do, that they will say at the end of the sermon—and the worthy editors of the magazines will say in the obituary—what they died worth, that every one may see how they have been, year after year, laying up treasures, and with what sincerity they have been singing—

“All that I am, and all I have,  
 Shall be for ever thine;  
 Whate'er my duty bids me give,  
 My cheerful hands resign.”

But I am deviating as well as making a greater trespass upon your time; for I never wish to say much upon these occasions about money matters. I am not fond of teasing, or tricks upon such occasions as these, and therefore I will leave the business with you, only saying, *“Peace be within these walls, and prosperity within this place. For my brethren and companions' sakes I will now*

*say, peace be within thee.” “Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.” Amen.*

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#### MONUMENTS OF HUMAN GRANDEUR PERISH.

THE monuments of human greatness yield in succession to the destroying influence of time. Whatever is magnificent, or beautiful, or excellent, possesses only a temporary influence, and commands only a transient admiration; in the course of a few years, or at most a few ages, imagination is required to supply departed graces, and genius mourns over extinguished glory. The combinations of society have produced astonishing effects: to man in his collective strength nothing is impossible, and few things appear even difficult; he has dared every thing; and he has achieved so much as amply to repay him for his labours. The extent of sovereignty which he grasped, when he stretched his sceptre over numberless provinces, and planted the line of his dominion from sea to sea, demonstrated the unbounded character of his ambition, and the incalculable variety of his resources. The stupendous productions of art, on which he inscribed his victories, and which he intended as the pillars of his fame, have combined and exhibited all that is sublime in conception, and all that is graceful in execution. Could he have attached durability to these, his triumph would have been complete—he would have bound time to his chariot-wheels, and rendered the monuments of his greatness coeval with the existence of the heavenly bodies. But that irresistible power has dissolved all the associations which he formed, and overthrown all the structures which he raised. He touched the seats of empire with his commanding sceptre, and the thrones of the earth crumbled into dust. Scarcely was the head of the monarch laid beneath the sod, before his dominion perished. Scarcely the active hand of the warrior stiffened in death, ere the

provinces which he had won revolted, and another hero arose—to run the same career of danger and oppression, to mark out the globe for himself, and to resign, in his turn, a crown so hardly achieved. Of Nineveh—of Babylon—we have no remains: of Egypt we have only characters of degradation: of Rome there exist but the melancholy fragments of ruined grandeur. With the respective empires, the monuments of their power have been defaced or destroyed. Time has wasted the gardens—extinguished the paros—prostrated the colossus—dilapidated the temple—unravell'd the labyrinth—broken down the mausoleum upon its dead—and left the pyramids to mark the progress of his effacing hand passing over them, and to deride the folly of human ambition, when its works outlive the name of their projectors.

When these exhibitions of human ability are swept away from the earth, or so much of them only remains as to awaken sentiments of pity more lively than those of admiration, history restores the empire, and science rears the fallen cities anew. Again Palmyra rises from among her ruined temples and tottering pillars: again Rome assumes the sceptre of the world, and binds distant nations to her throne. The work of the destroyer is but half effected, while the record of former times remains. The heroes of antiquity live over again; and the great monarchies burst forth afresh in all their primeval splendour. Letters seem to promise that immortality which neither arms could command, nor arts acquire. The blaze of war is quickly extinguished:—it is indeed a devouring fire; but it is short lived, in proportion to its fierceness. Like the beacon which is kindled to affright the nations, it burned for a night, and expired upon its own ashes. But

the inspiration of the poet is a lambent flame, playing around the imagination from age to age, and shedding its mild and brilliant light upon distant lands and times, when the consuming element of discord is forgotten. The magic pen of the historian raises from their resting place the departed shades of princes and warriors, and embodying them in their proper forms, brings them again to act their part upon the stage of time, fills the world with new agents, and enables us to judge of their characters with ease and accuracy; while we feel ourselves sheltered from the miseries at the same time that we ascertain the extent of their policy and achievements. Yet this mausoleum of former greatness rears its majestic head only for a season. In vain the poet and the historian promise themselves, or the subjects of their eulogy, immortality: in vain they flatter themselves that they have erected a monument more durable than brass, loftier than the royal elevation of the pyramids; which neither the wearing shower, the unavailing tempest, the innumerable succession of years, nor the flight of seasons, shall be able to demolish: they dream but of a fame that shall move round the circle of time. Many such a fond enthusiast has floated down the stream, without leaving even the wreck of his name as a memorial. And of those who have stood highest on the records of renown, a part of their works has perished. Time has not spared even science. The precious fragments of ancient writings resemble the ruins of some great empire: enough remains to delight, to impress, to instruct; but these remnants cause us to lament the more bitterly that which is lost to us, as an evil irreparable, and afford a lesson more ample of human vanity than of human distinction.—*Collyer.*

## SERMON XXX.

THE EVIL AND DANGERS OF POPULAR IGNORANCE.

BY THE REV. JAMES DIXON.

ADDRESSED TO TEACHERS OF SUNDAY-SCHOOLS.

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“Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.”—  
Prov. xxix. 18.

THE invitation to address you this evening, which I received from the respected secretary of the Sunday-school Union, requires me to address myself especially to the teachers of Sunday-schools; and, as our time must necessarily be short and limited, I shall enter, without detaining you by way of preface, upon the subject of this service.

Let me, however, be permitted to make one preliminary remark—that sensible men, who engage in any enterprise whatever, must be influenced in their exertions by the importance of the end to be accomplished, and the prospective probabilities of success—deriving their main stimulating motives from the nature of the institution to which they attach themselves. It will not, therefore, be necessary for me, in recommending to you the cause of Sunday-schools, to enter into much detail, but rather to take up one or two of the great leading principles of such institutions, and bring them as clearly before your attention as I can. And allow me to say, that I wish to be influenced by these feelings and motives myself. I should not attach myself to any institution whose principles I did not approve of, and I could not approve of them if I did not think they imbodyed the leading features of Christianity; for I can only expect success just as they incorporate and exhibit the great essential principles of revealed truth.

Now, I believe that Sunday-school institutions do this in an especial manner, and that they are highly calculated to effect great good in the world, because, I observe,

*First*, THAT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION, COMMUNICATED TO A PEOPLE, MAY BE CONSIDERED AS A PREVENTIVE OF EVIL, and is to be taken up and prosecuted under this view with every legitimate prospect of success. If, my brethren, there be in human nature a disorder of the mental faculties, it must be of infinite consequence to attempt to correct it by introducing, as early as possible, the seeds of divine truth into the mind. It is by such efforts, for instance, that the evils of ignorance are alone to be met and mastered; and let me tell you, that the ignorance, the error, the darkness, and the bewildered judgment observable in man, are not accidents of nature, but are general, innate, and universal.

The cause of this disorder of the human mind is to be found in man's fall from a state of rectitude and holiness into a state of sin and evil. The soul, my dear brethren, has been involved in a state of midnight darkness, as the fruit and consequence of original sin; and you have, therefore, in human nature, under all its different exterior formations, and classes, and situations, and modes of happiness, and sources of misery, two things—a spiritual and intellectual nature

remaining entire and unimpaired in its essential properties, while its faculties lie in a state of entire disorganization and ruin. In the very lowest form of humanity—in the negro, the Hottentot, the Esquimaux, as well as the lowest and most debased of our own population—you have a spiritual and noble nature remaining in its nature entire, capable of improvement, capable of wisdom, capable of religion, capable of contemplating and enjoying God, and formed for immortality; but you have, at the same time, a nature wholly disordered and involved in utter ignorance of its own faculties, notwithstanding. The soul of man, in its present degraded state, is something like an existence, if you could find such in the universe, surrounded by objects of sensation, but without any capacity to enjoy those sensations. If you could find such a nature as this, you would have something analogous to the state of the human soul; for every person that is born into the world is surrounded by all that is fitted to draw forth the noblest faculties of his nature—the works of God, the noble footsteps of the divinity, the words of salvation, the privileges and blessings of true religion—but he has no eye to behold this scenery of moral and spiritual beauty, he has no ear to be charmed by the sounds of this salvation. If so, then, brethren, is he not like that personification of misery to which I have just adverted—a being whom the light of every morning invites to praise and to the richest enjoyment? But no—that light he never saw—that enjoyment he never felt! Every sound in the universe pouring its chorusses of sweet music on his ear: but no—he is insensible to the charming melody; the fragrance of every flower casting its perfume upon his senses to revive and cheer him: but no—he cannot enjoy it; the rich fruits of every clime thrown into his lap to extend and increase his happiness: but no—he can neither appreciate nor enjoy them. Most truly, then, is the soul of man a mass of evil—a mass of misery—an unsightly and unseemly immortal existence, until it pleases God to impart unto it true wisdom, the quickening and elevating

influence of heavenly grace, and the joys and privileges of the great salvation.

But, although in man's mental and moral condition there is an entire incapacity for good and spiritual enjoyment, I wish you to understand that there is no incapacity to evil, to darkness, and error. Indeed, there is that in his nature which propels him into scenes of darkness, and mischief, and misery, incessantly. The ignorance and errors of his state are laid deeply in a vigorous and lively nature; and if he does not move on in the path of wisdom and piety, he progresses with fearful rapidity in the path of error and evil. Since we have fallen from God—since we have lost our primitive and innate rectitude and innocence—departed from our paradisaical perfection, and lost the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God, we necessarily go astray, directly, straight forward, heedlessly, in the ways of evil, until arrested by the interposition of God, by the power of his Spirit, the grace of the gospel, and made to appreciate the great and glorious privileges of the Christian revelation, through the saving influence of true faith.

Such, then, is man's real state; and do you not instantly discover the great value and importance, in such a case, of early instruction in the knowledge of religion? What so highly calculated to give vigour and strength to the prostrate intellect of man, as the truth of God early communicated to the mind? What so well calculated to disperse that cloud of midnight darkness which has thrown its shadows over the soul, as the communication, in early life, of a knowledge of the word of God, and the great principles of true religion? What so calculated to check man's eccentric career in error and folly, as a regulating principle of truth deeply rooted in his mind as a counteracting power? And what so calculated to remove from the soul those vicious principles by which it is governed, as the influence of that truth and grace which a knowledge of the Holy Scriptures is adapted to communicate? And although we know very well that efforts of this description are not invariably successful, yet the seed sown early in the

youthful mind must, in innumerable instances, by removing or destroying the influence of darkness, check the mind in its career of folly, and prove thus a preventive of evil.

Our Sunday-school method of instruction has this invaluable advantage especially connected with it, that it takes advantage of and accommodates itself to the mind in its youthful state, when most susceptible of impression. It is a well known fact, that continuance in ignorance and vice darkens more fully the intellect, increasingly hardens the heart, benumbs the feelings, and produces a more inveterate obstinacy in the ways of folly, which must give way with proportionately greater difficulty at more advanced periods of life. As the oak strikes its roots deeper, and gains more firm and inflexible fibres by its continued exposure to the rudeness of the storm, so the human spirit, continuing in a state of darkness, must increase in the obstinacy of indurate vice. It is of great consequence, then, my brethren, to take up the youthful mind as early as possible—to plant in the darkened nature the elements of truth, the principles of true religion, which can alone remove the darkness and overturn and destroy the dominion of evil.

But in our present state there is not only a disorder of the mental faculties; there is something worse than that—there is an entire depravity of the human heart; and that entire depravity is not an accident, but is innate, and belongs to our state. If so, it must be of great consequence to meet the exigencies of the case, and endeavour to correct this evil also, by the counteracting influence of religious instruction and the grace of God. The depravity of human nature, brethren, seems to consist in three things—the complete depravation of the heart; the deep-planted existence of every evil principle; together with a powerful propension to sensual indulgence. Without at all entering into the very difficult questions respecting the mode of man's corruption—whether it originated in the deprivation of our first parents of the gift and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, according to the opinion of some, or in

the direct and formal imputation of sin, which is the opinion of others—I shall only remark, that every child born into the world is evidently born an alien from God; his powers entirely perverted from good, determined to evil, and the sensual nature fully and entirely predominating over the intellectual and moral. This is evident. A spiritual nature would, of course, necessarily delight, as in its own native element, in spiritual employments, in converse with God, in the discharge of spiritual duties, a relish for the beauties and excellencies of true religion, in the fine play and development of holy affections, and the devout contemplation of the animating prospects of eternal life. But no—you find nothing of this in man; till changed and renewed by the Spirit of God, he lies prostrate, grovelling in the dust, delighting in sensuality and sin; and although seen to possess great dignity sometimes, his heart nevertheless is defiled and degraded by the inherence of passion and unholy principle.

If he was under a law of holiness, it would lead him to a life of usefulness and devotedness to the will of God; but no—he is not under the law of holiness, he is under the influence of an opposite law—a law of sin and death, which reigns predominant in his nature. If he possessed truly the life of God, it would appear in the emancipation of his noble nature from the thralldom of evil—his cheerfulness in devoting himself to holy service—in the fine flow of sanctified affections, and in the constant tendency of his heart towards God and spiritual things. But no—death hath enthroned itself in his moral constitution, and spread its dark and dismal dominion and influence throughout all his nature, and there is in him no spiritual emotion till produced by the life-giving influence of the Spirit of God.

This, my brethren, is man's state; and although it is not necessary to assume that every principle of evil actually appears in the life and habits of every individual—which I do not assume—yet we must maintain, that however calm, placid, beautiful, and unruined the exterior, in the case of children, and however engaging and cheerful the politeness and

courtesy of maturer years, there lies every principle of evil infolded in every heart. We do not admit the doctrine which appears to be a favourite in some modern schools, that human nature is raised, in some instances, to great moral excellency and virtue, independent of the influence of the gospel, and the correcting and controlling providence of God. We believe that man is entirely fallen, and owes every excellency of mind or character not to himself, but either to the controlling providence of God, or the illuminating influence of divine grace—that every man, in fact, is the world in miniature; and that all its evils, its pride, its ungodliness, its various passions, its avarice, its selfishness, all lie hid in every heart; so that, if you could, brethren, by some great and astonishing revolution, reduce the world's teeming population to a single individual, if appointed by the Creator to repeople the earth from his own nature, the world, in the course of a few years, would be just as corrupt as it is at present.

We adopt this principle because it has existed, in fact, already; for the seed of all the evil of the world actually once existed in the heart of one solitary individual, who has impressed his dark evil image upon his numerous progeny, the whole human race, just as the seeds and leaves of the oak bear, season after season, the image and impress of the leaves and seeds that precede them. This is the state of every man.

But there is another fact on which I may dwell for a moment—that there is in man a powerful propensity also to ungodliness and evil. Human nature is not as it has been supposed by some, a negative piece of depravity and evil; active, powerful principles dwell in his heart, prompting him to constant rebellion—principles which cannot be controlled by any mere resolution or tuition. How very often do they swell the heart with passion, propel our youth to rebellion against God and the practice of immorality—against all the advices that can be given to them, swaying their dark sceptre in the soul, spite of every good purpose and resolution?

And, my brethren, this power of evil

in man, to which I am inviting your attention, is peculiarly mischievous, because it is found to belong to ourselves. If we were merely exposed to some external foe, some evil influence from society or the world, we might then guard ourselves against it; but the awful truth is, that our worst enemies are in our own hearts. And here we see the great value of a Christian instruction being conveyed to our youth, as it meets the case not only of the intellectual but moral nature of man. Let the law of God in its divinity and authority be powerfully impressed on the youthful mind, and it is at least probable that its authority, force, and divinity will arrest the course and current of evil within. Let the true nature and obligations of Christianity be deeply impressed, in lessons of plain instruction, on the youthful mind, and it is at least probable that those lessons of instruction will arm the youth against his temptations to folly and sin. Let the true nature, dignity, value, and immortality of the soul, be taught in your elementary lessons of instruction to your youth—let especially the doctrines and precepts of our divine Christianity, the love of the Deity, the death of the Saviour, the promised influence of the Spirit of grace, the way and method by which sinners are accepted in Jesus Christ, the necessity of repentance and pardon—be pointed out and affectionately pressed upon their attention, and it is to be hoped, at least, those lessons, taught by the Spirit of God, will influence their hearts, stop them in their career of folly, and lead them to repentance and Jesus Christ.

And why, my brethren, should not our youth be taught to turn their reflections to religious truth as soon as they are capable of reflecting on truth at all? Why should they not be taught to understand the lessons of Christianity as soon as they are capable of understanding any lessons whatever? Why should not our youth be taught to breathe the praise of God as soon as they are capable of uttering any sentiments or feelings whatever? Why should they not be conducted to the throne of the heavenly grace, where Christ is seated as the Saviour, as soon

as they can contemplate any subject whatever? I see no reason why that should not be the case; and if you would meet the exigencies and moral wants of society, you must descend to the very lowest state in which humanity is to be found, and take up the human mind at its lowest state of sentiment, and lead it thus to the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

There is another remark which I would make upon this subject—that, in human nature, as seen on the great theatre of the world at present, you will easily perceive the sentient feelings greatly preponderating over the rational and moral. And it must be of great consequence, I think, to meet this fault of our nature, endeavour to curb and correct man's passions, and elevate him as a thinking and rational being. The evil to which I am now directing your notice, is open and obvious to every man's attention. Man is infinitely more a creature of feeling than of reflection; he follows, in an infinitely greater number of cases, the promptings of passion rather than the deductions of his reason and judgment, and has left impressed in society and on the world a great many more marks of his passion than of his wisdom. Indeed, my brethren, this very circumstance of passion preponderating over reason, is one of the greatest weaknesses of our nature; and a greater quantum of misery and misfortune arises out of it than from any other source whatever. They who pander to human taste, you must know, judge correctly on this subject; and hence you find that, by genius and industry, and the exercise of every other inventive and creative faculty, they endeavour to accommodate themselves to this state of the passions. I am sure you will feel impressed with this sentiment. Witness your sons and your daughters: as soon as ever they go into business, into society, or pleasure, they are instantly met by a race of men in a state of frenzy and (if we allow the great principles of Scripture and true religion) madness. In this world in which we live scarcely any thing is judged of as it is; that which is essential is considered a mere accident, and that which is a mere accident is considered essential; that

which is really good is considered evil, and that which is a real evil is considered good; that which is great, and noble, and dignified is considered little and mean, and that which is really little and mean is considered dignified and great; that which is a source of real glory and honour is considered, in the estimate and opinion of this foolish world, as a source of shame, and that which is a source of real shame is considered as a source of real honour.

Now, just so far as this principle of judging becomes universal, just so far as passion predominates over reason, and becomes the law of society, you may depend upon it that society is put in constant jeopardy. It matters not what the frenzy or passion may be—the danger arises from the passion itself: the passion may be for wealth, for luxury, for pomp or grandeur, for pleasure or amusement, or light trifling reading; the dominion of passion still exists, the moral sense becomes entirely blunted, man is rendered incapable of embracing religion and developing or manifesting its various graces and fruits. Yet your children are born into such a state of society, and it belongs to you, my brethren, to give them the corrective;—it belongs to you to place a book in their hands, to communicate instruction to their understandings and principles to their minds, by which the passions shall be brought into a state of control and subjection to more noble principles;—it belongs to you to give them a book which teaches, "All flesh is grass, and the glory of man is as the flower of grass: the grass withereth, and the flower fadeth, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever!" This is the great lesson that must be corrective of the ebullition of passion, and bring mankind to sobriety and reason, and subjection to religion.

Your time will not permit me to show how that which is preventive of evil in individual cases, must be preventive of evil in the body politic; and that, therefore, the efforts of our Sunday-schools must be infinitely valuable to society on that principle. They must communicate, for instance, to the public mind a very powerful impetus of good principle, and

elevate considerably the standard of pure morality. On these topics, however, our time will not this evening allow me to dwell; and, therefore, I pass on to remark,

*Secondly*, THAT RELIGIOUS OR CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION MUST BE CONSIDERED VERY VALUABLE, AS IT COMMUNICATES KNOWLEDGE, AND GIVES THE MEANS OF EXERCISING A SOUND JUDGMENT.

It appears very evident that Christian instruction possesses a power such as is furnished by no other means, to rouse our dormant energies from their slumber, and to raise man to a nobler capacity for mental exercise. And let me just remind you that, in our own times, during the course of one single generation, by inducting a people to the knowledge of letters, and, through that, to the knowledge of Christianity itself, you have seen entire nations shake themselves from their barbarous practices, and emerge, as if by enchantment, into a state of civilization, intelligence, and Christianity. In the South Sea islands, no sooner were the people taught the knowledge of Christianity—the art of reading, connected, of course, with the use of the means of grace and the Christian ministry—than, as if through the influence of magic, they instantly threw off the barbarous practices of their ancestors, demolished their bloody idolatry, adopted simple principles of proper conventional government, and built for themselves Christian edifices—rising from the deepest degradation and superstition to the dignity of knowledge, civilization, and, what is of greater importance still, to the happiness of true religion. And I think it is not going too far to say, that, in our own country, since we have had a system of education, if not strictly national, at least bordering upon it, its moral influence has been felt throughout every class of society; and Sunday-school instruction, connected with other modes of education, have acted on the public mind like a lever, and raised it from that chaotic state of darkness, in which seas of error and ignorance had rolled over it for many generations, to a platform, I was going to say, of elevated happiness, such as never before was witnessed, and

where the fruits of wisdom and religion appear to grow.

It is held, I know, by some, that we have less of genius now than in former times. The truth is this, brethren, we have less to discover now than in former times. Astronomy and the system of the universe could only be discovered once; the use of the compass and the art of navigation could only be discovered once; many mechanical and chemical powers, with their application to different objects, could only be discovered once: so that you have fewer discoveries only because there is less to discover. But supposing you had less of genius now than in former times, you have now an infinitely greater number of persons than before who are walking in the light of tested and demonstrated truth; so that the whole surface of mind, if I may be allowed such a representation, has, since the introduction of general education, been elevated a great number of degrees. And if this be true as it respects general knowledge, it is especially so as to religious knowledge; for, since the introduction of Sunday-schools, and the dissemination of the Scriptures, you have an infinitely greater number of minds than formerly, who, at least, possess the elementary truths of Christianity, whatever use they may make of their knowledge—whether or not it leads to salvation, it shines in their hearts, and they may thus be brought personally to enjoy it. We have attributed all this to the influence of religious instruction; and there appears to be a clear reason for this, inasmuch as it elevates the individual who is the subject of it, and keeps the sensual nature of man under control, as we have already illustrated.

You may remark another principle—that knowledge is creative, or communicative, if you prefer the phrase. But for this quality, knowledge would be of very insignificant value indeed; and this is a hopeful circumstance for the full illumination of the world. There is at present a great mass of intelligence in our own community and in other parts of the world; and, therefore, upon the principle to which I have alluded, one may hope

that the sphere of light and salvation will be constantly enlarging itself; for the mind, which, by the blessing of God, has already received the light of truth, will not rest in itself, but bear out the truth in every direction throughout the world.

And let me remind you that religious education or instruction affords the materials for forming the mind on all the great subjects brought before the mind of our youth, and is, on that account, of great value. Every man who attains to greatness or usefulness, must judge and think for himself; and, if he is to judge and think for himself, it is of infinite moment that he should possess correct rules by which he is to judge. In communicating education to your youth, therefore, you confer a double benefit; you confer positive knowledge of the great truths and facts of religion, and then, secondly, you give a new power or faculty to the soul itself. And while uneducated persons, altogether ignorant of Christianity, are wholly incapable of forming an opinion on any great question that is submitted to them, and in which their eternal welfare is involved, the instructed mind, possessing the great principles of religious knowledge, will, if he properly uses his privileges, find his way safely through all the difficulties of this life to the glories of a better.

And let me tell you, that the quantum of Christian education and of religious knowledge possessed by a community will, under some aspects and circumstances of that community, be of infinite consequence and value. When the state of society is made to depend a great deal more on the modifications of public opinion than written codes of law, this will be found to be especially the case. When any society or kingdom is governed by mere codes of law—by arbitrary enactments, then, as there is no scope or room for the exercise of private judgment, the quantum or degree of religious knowledge or education possessed by the community will be of very little importance indeed. When governed by military law, the law of the sword, there is of necessity no kind of scope for the exercise of private judg-

ment; and the people will, in that state of rudeness and ignorance, offer their idolatries to the throne of power, without discovering or feeling their degradation. And hence you know that all tyrants, both civil and ecclesiastical, have attempted constantly to keep the population in a state of ignorance, who, in their turn, willingly submit to it. But the community must either be governed by power, or the interests of the community must rest upon knowledge. Now, it is assumed that the population of this empire are not to be governed by mere power; and if not to be governed by mere power, it must be by knowledge; so that the quantity of true wisdom and light possessed by such a community must, under such circumstances, be of great consequence. Every man who elevates his own character, elevates the community with it, and adds to the general stock of good. And hence the real amount of national wisdom will not depend at all on her codes of laws, or her written literature, mouldering in our museums or public libraries, but in the number of minds brought under the influence of Christian saving knowledge. Egypt has possessed her pyramids and her monuments in the midst of her ignorance and darkness; Greece had her poets, orators, and philosophers, in the midst of her degrading subjection to Turkey; Italy, the remains of her sciences and her arts, in the midst of her comparative bondage and barbarism; and it may happen that England, too, may possess, at some future period, the remains of her wisdom by the side of barbarism, decay, and ruin. I hope it may not be so—God forbid it should. At all events, the amount of knowledge possessed will be of great moment to society, in times, for instance, of great agitation; when first principles are to be debated, it is of consequence that we should understand those principles, and attain to an elevated state of wisdom.

Whether such be the signs of the times in which we live, I leave you to judge; but one fact appears obvious to me, that the time has passed by when the human mind and human institutions can remain stationary. Those institutions that have

been surrounded by a venerable antiquity ; institutions which our forefathers have planted with an expectation, perhaps, that they would stand like pyramids, and descend unaltered to their remotest posterity, are found to contain the seeds of decay. The public mind is borne from established institutions to first principles, and every man is asking, not what exists, but what is right. I say, then, that those who are giving our youth a good judgment, and rules for its legitimate exercise, are conferring a public benefit also.

And if we happen to exist in times of great religious excitement and agitation, then we have another case in which the amount of true knowledge possessed by the community must be of great importance. If zealous efforts are making to extend the Messiah's empire, and convert the world to God, there must necessarily be difficulties, hazards, and dangers associated with this work ; so that these difficulties can only be met successfully by a great deal of well-principled wisdom. If there be much enthusiasm and fanciful dreaming notions entertained in the times in which we happen to live, supported by powerful minds and great eloquence, it is of much consequence that the community should possess the grand principles of true wisdom and scriptural knowledge, in order that they may resist and reject those wrong ideas. And if infidelity has become audacious enough to step beyond its enclosures, for the purpose of extending its pestilential influence and to ruin the minds and prospects of our youth, it will then also be of much consequence that they possess the knowledge and principles that alone can defend and guide them. And if the old waymarks of truth are lost ; if creeds and confessions and the folios of olden times no longer exert their former influence on men's minds, when they are led back to discuss first principles in religion as well as in politics, it is then, too, that we should have a well-instructed population.

You will see, then, the nature and extent of the blessing conferred on our youth by Sunday-schools, embracing not only the individual but the general benefit of the community at large. But our time

will not permit me to extend my illustration of the advantages of a religious education to the length to which I had intended to carry it, and I must therefore be content with simply sketching the outline of what otherwise might have been largely insisted upon.

*Thirdly,* The next position which I intended to have taken is, THAT, AS THE MEANS OF COMMUNICATING HAPPINESS AND ENJOYMENT, INSTRUCTION IS OF GREAT VALUE AND IMPORTANCE.

This world, you must be reminded, brethren, is in a state of misery, because it is under the curse of God. There are anxieties, too, peculiar to human nature, but not peculiar to any class of men. There is much of equality in this respect. The merchant embarks in a foreign enterprise, and all his anxieties are swallowed up ; thousands, perhaps, depend on its success, and the happy and honourable existence of his own family. The fisherman embarks his trading vessel to earn a scanty maintenance, and he is just as anxious about his little concerns. Even the poor man who begs at your door for bread, watches your looks and waits for your determination with equal anxiety, because his home, his well-being, and even his life may depend on your casual resolution. The poor, however, have afflictions peculiar to themselves, from their dependence, the nature of their employments, and the casualties to which they are subjected. Now, it may be said by some, that to communicate light and knowledge into the dismal abodes of the poor, is only to illuminate misery and show them their pitiable state of wretchedness. But instruction and knowledge will afford, at least to some of the poor, the means of advancement in life ; and although they cannot give to all the means of success and happiness—for there is not perhaps scope for that—yet, if success follows only in a few instances, your exertions shall have been greatly rewarded.

But knowledge will also arm the mind with power, by which the ills of life may be better sustained. And I cannot but think that to the instructions received at Sunday-schools and elsewhere, not a little

of the courage, and fortitude, and magnanimity displayed by many of our poor countrymen under depression, misery, and dark and grinding poverty, scarcely ever, perhaps, to be paralleled, is to be chiefly attributed. It was the blessed book they were there taught to read—the grace of the blessed God they were there taught to adore and confide in—the salvation of the Redeemer in whom they were taught to believe the supports of the Holy Spirit—the comforts of true religion they were then taught to seek and to cherish, and the blessed hopes of eternal life: these sustained them in the dark and cloudy day; so that the slanderer who says there is something antipatriotic in the communication of knowledge to the poor, receives in this practically his own refutation.

Besides, knowledge, coupled with true religion, enables the poor to support their afflictions by giving them consolation and support here, and the hope of heaven in a future state. Some evils can only be overcome by being endured; but, as certainly as the sun rises, as certainly as the tide ebbs and flows, and one season follows another, so certainly shall evil, and calamity, and suffering rest upon our world. The storm and the thunder may fall from different parts of the heaven on different portions of the earth; but descend most certainly the storm will, so long as we are under the curse of sin and alienation from God. Those, then, who do their fellow creatures most good, will lead them to expect true comfort only in religion, in communion with God, and in the blessed hope of a glorious immortality.

*Fourthly,* CONSIDERED AS THE INTRODUCTORY MEANS OF LEADING MEN INTO THE FAITH AND EXPERIENCE OF THE GOSPEL, EARLY RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IS OF INFINITE VALUE.

It is a principle of the gospel that the faith of true Christians should rest upon a written system of doctrine, and that their experience shall be moulded accordingly; that faith which does not rest on the written Scriptures is not faith; and a religious experience which does not derive its character from the same source is not Christian experience. Then how import-

ant is it that our youth should possess a knowledge of that book in which they are to believe for salvation! How important that they should early be instructed in the doctrines of Jesus Christ—his atoning death, his perfect righteousness, his intercession, the fulness of his grace, the indwelling of the Spirit in the human heart, and all the great principles of holiness that emanate from his teaching, since faith is to rest on, and experience to take the form of, these doctrines!

I am addressing myself, I presume, chiefly to Sunday-school teachers. I have given you my own thoughts on the importance of such institutions. Need I add any thing as a stimulus to your zeal? Then think of your suffering fellow countrymen, and the dangers to which our youth would be exposed, without such institutions and your continued efforts and zeal. They are too important in their nature to be abandoned. They cannot be abandoned. Then consider your work in connexion with the grand design of the Saviour's appearing among men: think of this; you are co-operators with him in effecting the redemption of the world, not meritoriously—the Saviour hath no partner in the work of his sufferings—but in bearing out, so to speak, the doctrines of the cross, and endeavouring to impress them on the minds of the rising generation.

Consider your efforts, too, in connexion with the extension of the church. You are performing the most interesting office of a minister of Christ, in communicating knowledge to the rising race, and extending the triumphs of the church. Consider your efforts in connexion with the general happiness of man. If the world is ever to be illuminated and emancipated from the reign of darkness, the word of God declares, that "it shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of God." If it is ever to be the blessed abode of peace and amity, and brotherly affection and love, the word of God declares, that "the lamb and the lion shall lie down together." If it is to be the dwelling-place of God our Saviour, not corporeally, but spiritually and individually, then it declares, that "unto him every knee shall bow, and

every tongue confess that he is Lord." Let me remind you that this great work cannot be accomplished without your continued and most zealous exertions. Go on, then, undismayed by difficulties—unappalled by the opposition of interested men, undaunted by the desertion of pretended friends—ever look up to God for the assistance and grace you require: and may the Lord go with you; may his blessing rest increasingly upon your labours; and may the light of his countenance shine upon you and give you abundant peace! Amen.

### SCRIPTURE ILLUSTRATIONS.

#### NO. III.

SOME time ago, a few ladies were reading the third chapter of Malachi: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me," &c. One of the ladies gave it as her opinion, that the fuller's soap, and the refiner of silver, were only the same image, intended to convey the same view of the sanctifying influences of the grace of Christ. "No," said another, "they are not just the same image; there is something remarkable in the expression in the third verse: 'He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.'" They all said, that possibly it might be so. This lady was going into the town, and she promised to see a silversmith, and report to them what he said on the subject. She went, without telling him the object of her errand, and begged to know the process of refining silver; which he fully described to her. "But do you sit, sir?" "O, yes, madam, I must sit, with my eye steadily fixed on the furnace; since, if the silver remain too long, it is sure to be injured." She at once saw the beauty, and the comfort, too, of the expression, "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." Christ sees it needful to put his children into the furnace; but he is seated by the side of it. His eye is steadily intent on the work of purifying, and his wisdom and

his love are both engaged to do all in the best manner for them. Their trials do not come at random; the very hairs of their head are all numbered. As the lady was returning to tell her friends what she had heard, just as she turned from the shop door the silversmith called her back, and said that he had forgot to mention one thing; and that was, that he only knew that the process of purifying was complete by seeing his own image in the silver. When Christ sees his image in his people, his work of purifying is accomplished.

#### NO. IV.

THE most ancient and general idolatry in the world was that wherein the sun and the moon were the objects of divine worship. This idolatry was founded upon a mistaken gratitude, which, instead of ascending up to the Deity, stopped short at the veil which both covered and disclosed him. With the least reflection or penetration, they might have discerned the Sovereign who commanded, from the minister\* who did but obey. In all ages mankind have been sensibly convinced of the necessity of an intercourse between God and man: and adoration supposes God to be both attentive to man's desires and capable of fulfilling them. But the distance of the sun and moon is an obstacle to this intercourse. Therefore, foolish men endeavoured to remedy this inconvenience by laying their hands upon their mouths, and then lifting them up to those false gods, in order to testify that they would be glad to unite themselves to them, but that they could not. This was that impious custom so prevalent throughout the east, from which Job esteemed himself happy to have been preserved: "*When I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness, my heart hath not been secretly enticed, nor my mouth kissed my hand.*" Job xxxi. 26, 27.—*Rollin.*

\* Among the Hebrews, the ordinary name for the sun signifies "minister."

## SERMON III.

### THE UNPARDONABLE SIN.

BY THE REV. THOMAS CHALMERS, D. D.

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*“Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.”—Matthew xii. 31, 32.*

LET us never suspend the practical influence of what we do know, by idly rambling in a vain and impertinent pursuit of what we do not know. Thus much we know from the Bible,—that God refuses not his Holy Spirit to them who ask it,—that every right movement of principle within us is from him,—that when we feel an impulse of conscience, we feel the Spirit of God knocking at the door of our hearts, and challenging from us that attention, and that obedience, which is due to the great Lawgiver,—that if we follow not the impulse we provoke and dissatisfy him who is the Author of it,—and that there is such a thing as tempting him to abandon us altogether, and to surrender the friendly office of plying us any longer with his admonitions and his warnings. Hence an emphatic argument for immediate repentance. By every moment of delay we hasten upon ourselves the awful crisis of being let alone. The conscience is every day getting harder; and he who sits behind, and is the unseen Author of all its instigations, is lifting every day a feebler voice, and coming always nearer and nearer to that point in the history of every determined sinner, when, left to his own infatuation, he can hold up a stubborn and unyielding front to all that instrumentality of advice and of expostulation that is brought to bear upon him. The preacher plies him with his weekly voice, but the Spirit refuses to lend it his

constraining energy; and all that is tender, and all that is terrifying, in his Sabbath argument, plays around his heart, without reaching it. The judgments of God go abroad against him; and, as he carries his friends or children to the grave, a few natural tears may bear witness to the tenderness he bore them; but that Spirit who gives to these judgments all their moral significance, withholds from him the anointing which remaineth; and the man relapses, as before, into all the obstinate habits, and all the uncrucified affections, which he has hitherto indulged in. The disease gathers upon him, and gets a more rooted inveteracy than ever: and thus it is, that there are thousands and thousands more, who, though active and astir on that living scene of population that is around us, have an iron hardness upon their souls, which makes them, in reference to the things of God, dark and sullen as the grave, and fast locks them in all the insensibility of spiritual death.

Is there no old man of your acquaintance who realizes this sad picture of one left to himself, that we have now attempted so rapidly to lay before you? Then know, that by every deed of wilful sin, that by every moment of wilful delay in the great matter of repentance, that by every stifled warning of conscience, that by every deafening of its authoritative voice among the temptations of the world, and the riot of lawless acquaintances,

you are just moving yourself to the limits of this helpless and irrecoverable condition. We have no doubt but you may have the intention of making a violent step, and suddenly turning round to the right path ere you die: but this you will not do, but by an act of obedience to the reproaches of a conscience that is ever getting harder: this you will not do without the constraining influence of that Spirit who is gradually dying away from you: this you will not do, but in virtue of some overpowering persuasion from that monitor who is now stirring within you, but with whom you are now taking the most effectual method of drowning his voice, and disarming him of all his authority. Do not you perceive that, in these circumstances, every act of delay is madness,—that you are getting by every hour of it into deeper water,—that you are consolidating a barrier against your future return to the paths of righteousness, which you vainly think you will be able to surmount, when the languor and infirmity of old age have got hold of you,—that you are strengthening and multiplying around you the wiles of an entanglement which all the struggles of death-bed terror cannot break asunder,—that you are insulting the Spirit of God by this daily habit of stifling and neglecting the one and the other call that he is sounding to your moral ear through the organ of conscience? And oh, the desperate folly of such a calculation! Think you, think you, that this is the way of gaining his friendly presence at that awful moment, when the urgent sense of guilt and danger forces from the sinner an imploring cry, as he stands on the brink of eternity? “How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn ye at my reproof. Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you; I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out mine hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as

desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you: then they shall call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.”

You see, then, how a man may shut against himself all the avenues of reconciliation. There is nothing mysterious in the kind of sin by which the Holy Spirit is tempted to abandon him to that state in which there can be no forgiveness, and no return unto God. It is by a movement of conscience within him that the man is made sensible of sin,—that he is visited with the desire of reformation,—that he is given to feel this need, both of mercy to pardon, and of grace to help him,—in a word, that he is drawn unto the Saviour, and brought into that intimate alliance with him by faith, which brings down upon him both acceptance with the Father, and all the power of a new and constraining impulse to the way of obedience. But this movement is a suggestion of the Spirit of God; and if it be resisted by any man, the Spirit is resisted; the God who offers to draw him unto Christ is resisted. The man refuses to believe, because his deeds are evil; and by every day of perseverance in these deeds, the voice which tells him of their guilt, and urges him to abandon them, is resisted; and thus the Spirit ceases to suggest; and the Father, from whom the Spirit proceedeth, ceaseth to draw; and the inward voice ceaseth to remonstrate,—and all this because their authority has been put forth so often, and so often turned from. This is the deadly offence which has reared an impassable wall against the return of the obstinately impenitent. This is the blasphemy to which no forgiveness can be granted, because, in its very nature, the man who has come this length feels no movement of conscience towards that ground on which alone forgiveness can be awarded him, and where it is never refused even to the very worst and most malignant of human iniquities. This is the sin against the Holy Ghost: it is not peculiar to any one age: it does not lie in any unfathomable mystery. It may be seen this day in

thousands and thousands more, who, by that most familiar, and most exemplified of all habits—a habit of resistance to a sense of duty, have at length stifled it altogether, and driven their inward monitor away from them, and have sunk into a profound moral lethargy, and so will never obtain forgiveness,—not because forgiveness is ever refused to any who repent and believe the gospel, but because they have made their faith and repentance impracticable. They choose not to repent; and this choice has been made so often, and so perseveringly, that the Spirit has let them alone. They have obstinately clung to their love of darkness rather than light; and the Spirit has at length turned away from them, since they will have it so. They wish not to believe, because their deeds are evil; and that Spirit hath ceased to strive with them, who has so often spoken to them in vain, and whose many remonstrances have never prevailed upon them to abandon the evil of their ways.

Take all this attentively along with you, and the whole mysteriousness of this sin against the Holy Ghost should be done away. Grant him the office with which he is invested in the word of God, even the office of instigating the conscience to all its reprovings of sin, and to all its admonitions of repentance,—and then, if ever you witnessed the case of a man whose conscience had fallen into a profound and irrecoverable sleep, or, at least, had lost to such a degree its power of control over him, that he stood out against every engine that was set up to bring him to the faith and the repentance of the New Testament,—behold in such a man a sinner against conscience to such a woful extent, that conscience had given up its direction of him; or, in other words, a sinner against the Holy Ghost to such an extent, that he had let down the office of warning him away from that ground of danger and of guilt on which he stood so immovably posted, or of urging him onward to that sure road of access, where, if a man seek for pardon, he will never miss it, and where, if he cry for the clean heart and the right spirit, he will not cry in vain.

And as there is nothing dark or incomprehensible in the nature of this sin, so there is nothing to impair the freeness of the gospel, or the universality of its calls and of its offers, or its power of salvation to all who will, or that attribute which is expressly ascribed to it—that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. It is never said that pardon through that blood, which is to cleanse from all sin, is extended to any but those who believe. If you do not believe, you do not get pardon; and if you will not believe, because you love darkness rather than light,—if you will not believe, because you will not abandon those evil deeds which the Spirit tells you, through the conscience, that you must forsake in coming unto Christ,—if his repeated calls have been so unheeded and so withstood by you that he has at length ceased from striving,—then, the reason why your sin is unpardonable is just because you have refused the gospel salvation: the reason why your case is irrecoverable is just because you have refused the method of recovery so long and so often that every call of repentance has now come to play upon you in vain; the reason why you lie under a guilt that can meet with no forgiveness, is not that one or all of your sins are of a dye so deep and so inveterate, that the cleansing power of your Saviour's atonement cannot overmatch them. Let the invitation to the fountain that is open in the house of Judah circulate among you as freely as the preacher's voice,—for sure we are that there does not stand, at this moment, within the reach of any of us, any desperado in vice so sunk in the depths of his dark and unnatural rebellion that he is not welcome if he will; but if ye will not come that ye may have life, this is your sin; this is the barrier in the way of your forgiveness. Grant us repentance and faith, and we know not of a single mysterious crime in the whole catalogue of human depravity that the atoning blood of our Saviour cannot wash away. But, withhold from us repentance and faith—let us see the man who stands unrebuked out of his wickedness, by all that conscience has reproached him with—unmoved out of the hardness

of his unbelief, by all that power of tenderness which should have softened his unrelenting bosom, when told of the Saviour who had poured out his soul unto the death for him; if all this resistance and contempt of his has been so long and so grievously persisted in, that the Spirit has ceased to strive,—then, it is not the power of the gospel that is in fault, but the obstinacy of him who has rejected it. The sufficiency of the gospel is not detracted from by so much as a jot or a tittle. So this very hour may we proclaim it as the savour of life unto life to the very worst of sinners who receive it. But if he so turn aside from its invitations, and the habit be so fixed with him, and conscience get into such a state of immovable dormancy, that the Spirit gives him over,—it is not that the gospel does not carry a remedy along with it for one and all of his offences, but because he refuses that gospel, that it is unto him the savour of death unto death.

A king publishes a wide and unexpected amnesty to the people of a rebellious district in his empire, upon the bare act of each presenting himself, within a limited period, before an authorized agent, and professing his purposes of future loyalty. Does it at all detract from the clemency of this deed of grace, that many of the rebels feel a strong reluctance to this personal exhibition of themselves, and that the reluctance strengthens and accumulates upon them by every day of their postponement; and that, even before the season of mercy has expired, it has risen to such a degree of aversion on their parts as to form a moral barrier in the way of their prescribed return that is altogether impassable? Will you say, because there is no forgiveness to them, there is any want of amplitude in that charter of forgiveness which is proclaimed in the hearing of all; or that pardon has not been provided for every offence, because some offenders are to be found with such a degree of perverseness and of obstinacy in their bosom, as constrains them to a determined refusal of all pardon? The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin; and there is not a human creature who, let him repent and believe,

will ever find the crimson inveteracy of his manifold offences to be beyond the reach of its purifying and its peace-speaking power. And tell us if it detract, by a single iota, from the omnipotence of this great gospel remedy, that there are many sinners in the world who refuse to lay hold on it? To the hour of death it is within the reach of all and of any who will. This is the period in the history of each individual, at which this great act of amnesty expires: and, to the last minute of his life it is competent for me, and for every minister of the gospel to urge it upon him, in all the largeness, and in all the universality which belong to it; and to assure him that there is not a single deed of wickedness with which his faithful memory now agonizes him, not one habit of disobedience that now clothes his retrospect of the past in the sad colouring of despair, all the guilt of which, the blood of the Saviour cannot do away.

But, though we may offer,—that is not to say that he will accept: though we may proclaim, and urge the proclamation in his hearing, with every tone of truth and of tenderness,—that is not to say that our voice will enter with power, or make its resistless way through those avenues of his heart, where he has done so much to rear a defending barrier, that may prove to be impenetrable. Though there be truth in our every announcement,—that is not to say that the demonstration of the Spirit will accompany it,—even that Spirit who, long ere now, may have left to himself the man who, his whole life long, has grieved and resisted him. It is still true that the pardon lies at his acceptance; and it may be as true that there can be no pardon to him, because he has brought such an inveterate blindness upon his soul, that he will neither receive the truth nor love it, nor feel those genuine impulses by which it softens the heart of man to repentance. And thus it is, that while the blood of Christ cleanseth the every sin of every believer, the sin against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven; because, with this sin, and with its consequences upon him, man wills not, and repents not, and believes not.

And now for the interesting question,—How am I to know that I have committed this sin that is said to be beyond the reach of forgiveness? We are sure the right solution of this question, if well understood, would go to dissipate all that melancholy which has been felt by many a bewildered inquirer. You cannot take a review of the years that are gone, and fetch up this mysterious sin to your remembrance, out of the sins that are past. There is not one of them, which, if turned away from, in the faith of that pardon which is through the blood of the atonement—there is not one of them beyond the reach of the great redemption of the gospel. The sin against the Holy Ghost is not some awful and irrevocable deed, around which a disordered fancy has thrown its superstitious array, and which beams in deeper terror upon the eye of the mind, from the very obscurity by which it is encompassed. There ought to be no darkness and mystery about it. The sin against the Holy Ghost is such a daring and obstinate rebellion against the prerogative of conscience, that all its calls to penitency have been repelled, and all the urgency of its admonitions to flee to the offered Saviour have been withstood; and all this obstinacy of resistance has been carried forward to such a point in the history of the unhappy man, that his conscience has ceased from the exercise of its functions, and the Holy Ghost has laid down his office of prompting it, and the tenderness of a beseeching God may be sounded in his ear,—but, unaccompanied as it is by that power which makes a willing and obedient people, it reaches not his sullen and inflexible heart: and instead, therefore, of looking for that sin among those imaginary few who mourn and are in distress, under an overwhelming sense of its enormity, I look for it to those thousands who, trenched among the secularities of the world, or fully set on the mad career of profligacy, are posting their careless and infatuated way, and suffering Sabbaths and opportunities to pass over them, and turn with contempt from the foolishness of preaching, and hold up the iron front of insensibility

against all that is appalling in the judgments of God, and cling to this perishable scene, under the most trenching experiences of its vanity, and walk their unfaltering path amid all the victims which mortality has strewn around them, and every year drink deeper into the spirit of the world,—till the moral disease rises to such an inveteracy, that all the engines of conversion, unaided as they are by that peculiar force and demonstration which is from on high, fall powerless as infancy upon them, and every soul amongst them, sunk in torpor immovable, will never, never be made to know the power and the life of a spiritual resurrection.

We know nothing that goes further to nullify the Bible, than the habit of subjecting the interpretation of its passages to any other principle than that all its parts must consist and be in harmony with each other. There has a world of mischief been done by the modifications that have been laid on the obvious meaning of Scripture, with the purpose of rendering it more palatable to our independent views of what is right, and wise, and noble. This, in fact, is deposing the word of God from that primitive authority which belongs to it, as the court of highest appeal,—all whose decisions are final and irreversible. Grant us that there is no contradiction between what we find in the book of God's counsel, and what we know by the evidence of our own experience, or the overbearing testimony of others; and such we hold to be the ignorance of man about the whole of that spiritual and unseen world which lies beyond the circle of his own observation, that we count it not merely his most becoming piety, but we count it also his soundest and most enlightened philosophy, to sit down with the docility of a little child to all that is intimated and made known to him by a well-attested revelation. After the deductions we have just now made, we know of no other principle on which we should ever offer to modify a verse or a clause of the written record, but the principle of that entire consistency which must reign throughout all its communications. We know of no other cross-examination which we have a right to set

upon this witness to the invisible things of faith, than to try it by itself, and to condemn it, if possible, out of its own mouth, by confronting together its own depositions. We are only at freedom to sustain or to qualify the literal sense of one of its announcements, by the literal, and equally authoritative sense of some other of its announcements. And such is our respect for the paramount authority of Scripture, that we know of no discovery more pleasing than that, by which the *apparent* inconsistency between two places is so cleared up, that all necessity for encroaching upon the literal sense of either of them is completely done away,—for it goes to establish our very impression of the unavoidable sanctity of its varied communications, and to heighten our belief that every semblance of opposition between the particulars of the divine testimony, exists not in the testimony itself, but in the misapprehension of our own dark and imperfect understandings.

Now, if you look to the thirty-first verse of the twelfth chapter of Matthew, you will perceive that all who think the sin against the Holy Ghost to lie in the commission of some rare and monstrous, but, at the same time, specific iniquity, cannot admit the first clause of the verse, without qualifying it by some of the undeniable doctrines of the New Testament. They would say, it is not true that all manner of sin shall be forgiven unto men, with the exception of this blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which they conceive to occur but seldom in the history of human wickedness. They would say that there is forgiveness to no sin whatever but on the faith and repentance of him who has incurred it,—and we must therefore suppose this, and qualify the clause by this indispensable condition, and thus make the clause to tell us how, such is the power of the gospel, that all the sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven of those who have embraced it, save that one sin against the Holy Ghost, for the remission of which, not even their acceptance of the gospel of Christ could avail them.

Now, the explanation we have given of this sin renders all this work of annex-

ing terms and modifications to this verse of the Bible unnecessary, and gives, we think, even to its literal and unrestricted meaning, a most placid consistency to all that is leading and undeniable in the doctrine of the New Testament. If the sin against the Holy Ghost be just that sin, in virtue of which the calls and offers of the gospel are so rejected as to be finally and irreversibly put away from us, then it is true—it is absolutely and unreservedly true—that all other manner of sin shall be forgiven but this one only. All who so reject this gospel have sinned against the Holy Ghost; and none who have accepted this gospel have incurred this sin, nor shall they want the forgiveness that is there provided for them.

It is quite in vain to think, that the sin against the Holy Ghost is confined to that period of the world at which our Saviour made his personal appearance in it. The truth is, that it is since Christ withdrew from the world that he now carries forward by the Spirit, as his agent and substitute, the business of pressing home upon men the acceptance of the gospel, by working with their consciences. He employs the Spirit as his witness, since he himself has gone away from us; and as in the business of entertaining the calls and offers of the New Testament, our doings are more exclusively with this Spirit, and not at all with the Saviour himself personally, we are surely as much in the way of committing the sin in question, as in those days when the Holy Ghost was not so abundantly given because Jesus Christ was not then glorified. All those, be assured, who refuse the gospel now, do so, because they refuse the testimony of this witness—do so, because they stifle within them the urgency of his rebuke, when he tells them of faith and repentance—do so, when he offers to convince them on principles that would be clear to themselves, could they be only so far arrested by the imperious claims of God, and of eternity, as to attend to them, that they are indeed in a way of guilt and alienation, which, if not turned from, through the revealed Mediator, will land them in the condemnation of a most righteous and unmitigable law.

And thus, in the day of reckoning, will this verse, in its most plain and obvious literalness, be so accomplished on the hosts who are assembled round the judgment-seat, that all who are free from this sin shall have their every other sin forgiven, just because they have obeyed the gospel in embracing the overtures of forgiveness—and that all who on that day shall find no escape, and no forgiveness, have this doom laid upon them just because each, without exception, has incurred the sin to which no forgiveness is awarded, by the very act of neglecting the great salvation.

The sin, then, against the Holy Ghost, so far from conferring any rare distinction of wickedness on him who is guilty of it, is, in fact, the sin of all who, living under the dispensation of the gospel, have, by their rejection of it, made it the "savour of death unto death." It is a sin which can be charged upon every man who has put the overtures of forgiveness away from him. It is a sin which if, on the great day of examination, you are found to be free from, will argue your acceptance of the gospel, in virtue of which its forgiveness is made sure to you. And it is a sin which, if found on that day to adhere to you, will argue your final refusal of the same gospel, in virtue of which your forgiveness is impossible, because you are out of the only way given under heaven, whereby men can be saved. So that, this sin, looked upon by many as the sin of one particular age, or, if possible to realize it in the present day, as only to be met with in a few solitary instances of enormous and unexpiable transgression, is the very sin upon which may be made to turn the condemnation and the ruin of the existing majority of our species.

Before we have done with this subject, there is one question which remains to be disposed of—does it appear from the historical circumstances of the case, that that conduct of the Pharisees which called forth from our Saviour the denunciation of the text, bears a resemblance to the account we have given of the sin against the Holy Ghost, as exemplified by the men of the present generation? In their rejection of Christ was there a determined rebellion of purpose against the light of

their own conscience? Was there a wilful and resolved suppression of the force of evidence? Was there an habitual stifling within them of the movement and the impulse of moral principle? Was there a firm and deliberate posting themselves on the ground of opposition in the whole of their past resistance to this Jesus of Nazareth? Was there an obstinate keeping of this ground? Was there an audacious and desperate intent of holding out against all that could be offered in the shape of proofs or of remonstrances on the side of Christianity? Was there a voluntary darkening, on their part, of the light of truth, when it began to dawn upon their souls, and threatened to carry their convictions away from them? Was there a habit of fetching up, at all hazards, every argument, however false, and however blasphemous it may be, on which they might rest the measures of a proud and interested party, and thus might give the shape, and the colouring of plausibility to that systematic opposition they had entered on?

It strikes us, that the whole history of the Pharisees in the New Testament, holds them out in the very attitude of mind which we have now described to you. And think you not that, in the work of maintaining this attitude against the warfare of all that moral and miraculous argument which was brought to bear upon them, they never smothered the instigations of conscience, and through it rebelled against that Spirit who conveyed, by this organ of the inner man, the whispers of his still but impressive voice? "Which of you convinceth me of sin," says the Saviour—"and if I tell you the truth, why do you not believe me?" Did conscience never tell them how impossible it was that Jesus of Nazareth should lie? Did not the words of Him that spake as never man spake, bear upon them the impress of truth as well as of dignity? Is there not such a thing as the suspicious aspect of an impostor?—and is there not also such a thing as the open, the declared, the ingenuous, and altogether overbearing aspect of integrity?—and is it not conceivable how, in this way, the words of the Saviour might have carried

such a moral evidence along with them as to stamp an unquestionable character on all his attestations? Now, was there no resistance of the Holy Spirit in the act of shutting the eye of the judgment against the whole weight and authority of this character? In the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the men of that day were honoured with the singular privilege of beholding God manifest in the flesh—of seeing all the graces of the Holy Spirit substantiated, without one taint of imperfection, on the life and character of one who wore the form of the species—of witnessing, if we may so express ourselves, a sensible exhibition of the Godhead—of having the truth of God fall in human utterance upon their ears, with a tone of inimitable candour—of seeing the earnest longing of God after the creatures he had formed, stamped in living and undeniable traces upon a human countenance—of beholding the tenderness of God expressed in human tears by him who wept over the sins and the sufferings of mankind—and all the goodness of Deity announcing itself distinctly in the mild and impressive sympathies of a human voice! Think you that there was no struggling with their own consciences, and no wilful blending of their own hearts on the part of those by whom such an exhibition was resisted? Surely, surely, the Spirit of God did much to subdue their acquiescence in the alone way of salvation when all his fruits, and all his accomplishments were gathered upon the person of the Redeemer into one visible assemblage—when the whole force of this moral ascendancy was made so nearly, and so repeatedly to bear upon them—when truth, with all its pleading energy, assailed them, and gentleness tried to win them over to the cause of their own eternity—and the soft eye of compassion beamed upon them—and the unwearied forbearance, which no weight of personal injustice could overcome, told them how, for their sakes, Jesus of Nazareth was ready to do all, and to suffer all—and patience, even unto martyrdom, left a meek but a firm testimony behind him. Oh, think you not, that in the perverse representations, and the spiteful malignity,

and the sullen immovable hardness, by which all this was withstood and overborne, there was such an outrage upon the authority of conscience, and such a dark and determined principle of rebellion against Him who prompts it with all its instigations, as by provoking him to cast them off from all his further communications, might raise an eternal barrier against that faith, and that repentance, and that obedience to the gospel of Christ, through which alone forgiveness is extended to a guilty world?

To aggravate still further this resistance to the moral claims of the Saviour on the part of his inflexible enemies, let us see how these very claims told on the consciences of other men. The officers whom they sent to apprehend him when they went faltered from their purpose at what they saw and heard; and when they returned with their errand unfulfilled, and the answer in their mouth “that surely never man spake like this man,” they found the masters they had to deal with were men of sterner materials—men who knew not what it was to falter—men who reproached them for their moral sensibility—and who had sternly resolved at all hazards, and in defiance to all principle, to rid themselves of this dangerous pretender. Again, when they instigated Pilate to a capital sentence against him, the Roman governor was shaken by all that he observed of this innocent victim; but look all the while at the unrelenting constancy with which they kept by their purpose, and in the barbarous prosecution of it schooled the governor out of his diffculties, and raised the frenzy of the populace, and surrounded the best and the kindest of the species with the scowl of a brutal and reviling multitude. And, lastly, when he had sealed his testimony by his blood, mark how the man who presided over his execution was overpowered into the acknowledgment, “Surely this was the Son of God;” and how the unsoftened and unsubdued stood fast to their object, and got his body to be watched, and a story to be devised, and a falsehood of deliberate manufacture to be thrown afloat, with which they might stem the growing faith of our Saviour’s resurrection.

Now, in this difference between the resolved and inflexible hatred of the Jewish persecutors of Christ, and the relencings of other men, do you see no suppression of the voice of conscience—no resistance to that light of principle which sends forth an occasional gleam over the path of the, determinedly apostate—do you see no one of those ingredients which give to the sin against the Holy Ghost all the malignancy that belongs to it: or, rather, in this hard and unmovable hostility against One, whose challenge to convince him of sin they dared not to entertain; against One, of whom they could not fail to perceive, that he was the mildest, and sincerest, and the most unoffending, and the most unwearied in well doing of all the characters that had met their observation—do you not perceive how it was in the course of their own offended pride, and their own threatened interest, that they made their systematic resistance to every moral argument, and hurried away their minds from every painful remonstrance; and that too in the very style in which the obstinately impenitent of the day do, in resistance to every demonstration of guilt, and to every warning of danger, walk in the counsel of their own hearts, and in the sight of their own eyes? It is very true, that it was upon an outward act of speaking on the part of the Pharisees, that our Saviour uttered this remarkable denunciation. But remember what he says himself upon this subject: how the things which came out of a man are evil because they are the products of a heart which is evil. Remember what is said a few verses before: how our Saviour knew what was in man—knew the thoughts of those Pharisees; and it is upon his knowledge of their thoughts, that he ascribed such a malignity, and laid such a weight of condemnation on the words which conveyed them. Remember what is said a few verses after, where the fruit is represented as bad, just because the tree is bad—where the words have their whole character of evil imparted to them, just because it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh; and out of the evil humours of the heart that the man bring-

eth forth evil things. And, surely, when after our Saviour had uttered such a peculiar sentence of condemnation on the sin against the Holy Ghost, he expressly connects the words of the mouth with the dispositions of the heart, ere he tells us that it was by our words we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be condemned—we ought no longer to do what we are sure is done by many in their obscure imaginations upon this subject; we ought not to liken the sin against the Holy Ghost to the spell of some magical incantation, deriving the whole of that deadly taint which belongs to it, from some infernal charm with which the utterance of mere language is darkly and unaccountably impregnated.

But, knowing that every denunciation of our great spiritual Teacher had some clear and unchangeable principle of morality to rest upon; and perceiving, as we do, that on this very occasion he refers us to the disposition of the heart, as that which gives to the utterance of the tongue all its malignity, let us, when reading of this desperate guilt of the Pharisees, look to the spirit and moral temper of the Pharisees; and, if possible, gather something that may carry to our own bosoms a salutary and convincing application.

And a single glance at the circumstances may be enough to satisfy us, that never, in any one recorded passage of their history, did they evince the bent of so inflexible a determination against the authority of conscience—never such a wilful darkening of their own hearts against the light and the power of evidence, as in the passage that is now before us. The whole weight of that moral argument on which we have already expatiated, was reinforced by a miracle so striking, and so palpable in its effects, that all the people were thrown into amazement. But what constituted the peculiarity of the miracle was, that it was just such a miracle as the Pharisees themselves had been accustomed to look upon with veneration, and had viewed as an example of successful hostility against the empire of darkness. They had faith in these possessions. They counted every one of them to be the work of Beelzebub;

and the casting out of any of them as a direct triumph of warfare against the Prince of the Devils. They themselves, it would appear, laid claim to this power of dispossessing these demons; and we have no doubt that the imagination of such a power residing with them and their children, or proselytes, would help to give them that prophetic sanctity in the eyes of the common people, which they so much aspired after. But when the very thing on which they tried to strengthen their own claims to authority, was done by that Man,—the progress of whose authority among his countrymen they were determined, at all hazards, to arrest,—they went round the whole compass of their principles, and quashed the voice of every one of them, rather than own the hand of God, or submit to the demonstration of his power in the miracle before them. It was indeed a desperate fetch which they made for an argument, when the very work in which they gloried, and on which they founded the credit of their order, was so maligned and misrepresented by them. They had ever been in the habit of ascribing the possessions of that age to the power of Beelzebub; and now, to give a colour to their hatred of Jesus and his claims, they suppose the house of Beelzebub to be divided against itself, and they ascribe to his power a miracle, the doing of which went to dispossess him of a part of his empire. They pretended that their sons, or their proselytes, had the power of casting out those possessions, and never failed to ascribe this power to the Spirit and the countenance of God: but now they turned round upon the matter, and, by rearing their argument against the Saviour in the direct face of their own principle, did they prove how firmly they were resolved to lay hold of any thing, rather than admit the claims of one who was so offensive to them. Thus did they give, perhaps, at this moment, a more conspicuous evidence than they had ever done before, how every proof, and every remonstrance, would all be wasted upon them. The Spirit of God had gone his uttermost length with them; and, on abandoning them for ever, he left behind him their blood upon their own

head, and the misery of an irrecoverable condition that was of their own bringing on. He had long borne with them: and it will be seen in the day of reckoning, when all mysteries are cleared up, how great the patience, and the kindness, and the unwearied perseverance were, which they had resisted. For, though the Spirit strives long, he does not strive always; and they brought on this crisis in their history just by the very steps in which every impenitent man brings it on in the present day—by a wilful resistance to the light of their own understanding; by a resolute suppression of the voice of their own conscience.

But we must bring all these explanations to a close. The distinction between speaking against the Son of man and speaking against the Holy Ghost, may be illustrated by what he says of the difference between bearing witness of himself, and another bearing witness of him. If he had had no other testimony than his own to offer, they had not had sin. If he had not done the works before them which none other man did, and which no mere son of man could do, they had not had sin. If he had had nothing to show on which to sustain the character that signalized him above the mere children of men, their resistance could have been forgiven. But he had shown the most abundant evidence on this point—he had just performed a deed which their every habit, and their every conception, led them to ascribe to the Spirit and the power of God—he had brought forward what to their own judgments was the testimony of the Spirit; and they resisted it. It was no longer now an opposition to man, and a railing of man, but a contemptuous negligence of man:—all this is sinful. But it was not that which blocked up the way against the remission of sin. It was when they reviled him who offered to lead them on in that way, that they were ever strengthening the barrier which lay across the path of acceptance. While the last and most conclusive proof that would be given of Jesus having indeed the seal and the commission of the Spirit upon him, was not yet tried, and found ineffectual—all their opposition to him

still partook of opposition to one of whom the most decisive evidence that he was any thing more than the son of man was still in reserve. It still partook of opposition to a fellow man. But, when that decisive evidence was at length offered, and the Spirit interposed with his last and greatest attempt to vindicate his own seal, and to authenticate his own commission on the person of Jesus of Nazareth,—then that which was before the speaking evil of the Son of man, became the speaking evil of the Son of God; and that aggravated to the uttermost length that it would now be permitted to go. And the Pharisees, by smothering the light of all that evidence which the Holy Spirit had brought forward, both in the miracles that were done, and in the graces of that sinless example which was so impressively before them, had, by that time, raised in their hearts such an intrenchment of prejudice against the faith of the gospel, and so discouraged the Holy Spirit from any further attempts to scale and to surmount it, that all recovery was hopeless, and all forgiveness was impossible.

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PARADISE.

VARIOUS have been the conjectures formed as to the precise spot which the garden of Eden once occupied. Numerous hypotheses have been invented, and plausibly supported. But, perhaps, at this distance of time, and especially considering the changes which must have taken place on the surface of our globe in consequence of the flood, as well as from other natural causes, it is impossible to decide the question satisfactorily. Of this, however, we are certain, that it was a garden adorned with every beauty; that the beneficent Creator showered down upon it the choicest of his favours; and that whatever was lovely to the eye, and grateful to the taste, and harmonious to the ear, might there be found in full perfection. The most enchanting prospects met the view at every turn; the most fragrant odours regaled the senses, and perfumed the air; the most delicious fruits invited the hand to pluck; the

sweetest harmony saluted the ear; all nature smiled, and creation, “through all her realms, gave signs of joy.”

Amidst all these beauties, we may imagine our great progenitors to have wandered forth. We may conceive with what delight they would rove together through the lovely groves of their terrestrial paradise. How sweet would be their communion! how unalloyed their bliss! No moments of coldness and distrust; no temporary cessation of warm affection was experienced. The flame of love burnt pure and bright; its lustre undimmed, and its power unquenched. Every thing around them conduced to their pleasure. Their path was strewn with flowers; they wandered through a wilderness of sweets. Around them the brute creation gambled in playful innocence. No venomous reptile, no ravenous beast of prey, with fierce and savage nature, raised in their mind one feeling of alarm. The lion laid down with the kid; the den of the cockatrice might be touched with safety; they did not hurt nor destroy through all the blissful place. No danger was apprehended; to fear they were perfect strangers; for there existed no cause to call forth such a sensation. Across their path, “the arrow that flieth by day” never shot. Their peaceful slumbers, “the terror by night” never disturbed. On them the pestilence that wasteth at noonday never shed its baleful influence. Pain, disease, and care, entered not the sacred limits of their abode: all was happiness, unmingled and unalloyed.

Their communion was of the most exalted nature. How often those superior intelligences, who reside in the immediate presence of the Eternal, were permitted to visit mortals in their primeval state, we are unable to ascertain; but it is probable that such visits were not then “short and far between.” What sublime discourse must our first parents have held with such companions! What lofty subjects must have formed the theme of conversation! What glorious discoveries must have been made of the power and goodness of the Creator; and how must they have enjoyed such golden opportunities.

But, above all, their fellowship with God himself must have been of the most sublime, ennobling, and endearing nature. They approached him not as sinners, but as the creatures whom he had made; as the sharers of his bounty, the objects of his care, the beloved favourites of his heart. They looked up to him as their friend, their benefactor, their father; and they found their whole delight in loving and serving him.

Although the earth brought forth spontaneously whatever was calculated to charm and to please, and whatever was necessary for use and sustenance, yet our first parents did not spend their days in idleness and inactivity. Their pleasures were heightened by exertion. Although they were strangers to laborious toil, sloth and supineness were equally unknown. The fertility of nature required their restraining hand to prune her luxuriance, and every hour brought its own appropriate employment. Thus *ennui* never oppressed their minds; and though surrounded with scenes of delight, the continual succession and recurrence of pleasing objects did not weary or disgust.

Thus smoothly rolled on the happy hours of the first of mortals. Every moment brought upon its wings renewed delight. Like the peaceful current of those gentle streams, which watered and fertilized their terrestrial heaven, their days glided on in calm tranquillity and undisturbed serenity. Alas! that such a scene of felicity should ever have vanished; and that what was once a glorious reality should have passed away as a morning dream, and as "a tale that is told."

There is sometimes a satisfaction in

looking back upon past scenes of delight. The mind loves to ruminate on the bright and fairy prospects which once opened before it, although they may have passed away for ever; and the thought that they have thus fled, no more to return, will serve to mingle an emotion of regret with the remembrance of the past, and will awaken in the bosom a pensive feeling of pleasing melancholy. It is with an emotion of this nature that we look back through the long ages which are gone by, and contemplate the glory and the happiness of our first parents in their pristine state of purity and perfection, ere sin had ravaged their beauteous residence, and ere the flaming sword had brandished its glittering terrors to prevent their approach to the tree of life. The recollection is imbittered by the thought that the paradise of Eden no longer exists; that man has been driven from its sacred precincts, and by transgressing the command of his Maker, has subjected himself both to temporal and eternal death. In this view, indeed, there is nothing whatever to awaken an idea of pleasure; for the picture is dark and dismal, and over it broods the blackness of despair. But while we think of the glory and felicity which man has lost, we are at the same time permitted to look forward to a more glorious inheritance which awaits the redeemed from among men, and to contemplate that fairer country,—that more delightful paradise,—of which the terrestrial Eden was only a shadow and a type.

"In paradise, within the gates,  
A nobler entertainment waits;  
Fruits new and old laid up in store,  
Where we shall feast, and want no more."

## SERMON XXXII.

### THE ENCOURAGEMENT TO PRAYER.

BY THE REV. GERARD T. NOEL, A.M.

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*“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”—Heb. iv. 16.*

A TRUE Christian knows well the nature and the value of prayer. Prayer is his intercourse with God; the source of his strength, and joy, and peace. Prayer is, in truth, the measure of his felicity. When dull, and cold, and heartless in this exercise of his spiritual faculties, he culls but scanty fruit from the varied comforts of life, while he finds every temptation to evil augmented in its power and influence over his mind. When, on the other hand, his prayer is warm, fervent, and unremitting, all is quiet and joyful in his heart. The smile of God sheds its light over every object which he contemplates, and thus disarms the world of its power to disturb his peace. “Watch and pray,” said our Saviour, “lest ye enter into temptation.” “Pray without ceasing,” said the apostle Paul; “Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

The same apostle refers to the subject of prayer in his epistle to the Hebrews; and introduces it in a very remarkable manner. “Seeing,” he observes, “that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points

tempted like as we are, yet without sin. *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*”

The words of the text point out to us,  
I. THE DUTY AND THE DESIGN OF PRAYER, and

II. OUR ENCOURAGEMENT TO FULFIL THEM.

I. The text suggests to us, THE DUTY AND THE DESIGN OF PRAYER. “Let us come to the throne of grace, *that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*”

First, *The invitation to the throne of grace marks out prayer to be the Christian's duty.* Prayer is the expression of weakness and dependence. It is the homage of the creature to the Creator; the supplication of an offender to his judge; the petition of a needy heart to a munificent and kind benefactor; the confidence of a child in the love of an indulgent parent; the intercourse of friendship; the acknowledgment of gratitude; the breathings of hope, and tenderness, and regard. The existence of such a duty is recognised even by natural religion; while it forms a marked feature in revealed religion.

So long, however, as the heart is under the influence of pride and earthliness, untouched by the kindly influences of the Holy Ghost; like any other service of religion, prayer is a mere ceremony, and not an enjoyment. It may lull the up-

brailings of conscience, but it does not describe affection. But when, under the sacred "drawings of the Father" to Christ, the soul is awakened to a sense of guilt and danger; when it discerns the fearful nature of its temptations and snares; when it perceives the adaptation of the resources of the gospel, both to this guilt and to these perils; when it comprehends, in part at least, the plan of love and compassion, as unfolded in the sorrows of Gethsemane and the cross; prayer then becomes the emotion of the heart, the influence of thoughts and of feelings, connected with all its highest notions of happiness. The duty is then recognised to be founded alike upon the sympathy of affection, and upon the obligations of nature.

This twofold obligation is beautifully expressed in the direction of Jesus Christ to his disciples: "When thou enterest into thy closet, shut to thy door, and pray to thy Father." The tender relationship thus recorded by Christ, gives the true character of that sacred intercourse with God, which we term prayer.

Secondly, But let us advert rather to the design or *object of prayer*. "Let us come to the throne of grace, *that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need.*" A cold, skeptical mind has sometimes descanted upon the apparent inutility of prayer. "If God be omnipotent and kind, and intimately acquainted with human wants, then the expression of those wants is superfluous. It were, likewise, presumptuous to suppose, that the decisions of so great a Being in any measure can be swayed by the weak and selfish petitions of a creature, and that a creature 'crushed before the moth.'"

Such a mind is equally ignorant of the nature of man, as of the command of God. Prayer is not intended to yield any accession of knowledge to the Creator, but to bring the creature into a sense and habit of entire submission, and love, and dependence. The object of true religion is to bring back the heart of a sinner to the imitation and enjoyment of God. It is by intercourse with God that this object is fulfilled, and this intercourse we call

prayer. God offers himself to his people as the source of their happiness. "Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace." Hence the removal of external injuries; the prevention of external pain; and the incessant production of external enjoyment, could not reinstate a fallen but intellectual and immortal creature in its proper happiness. No work of external mercy could reach his case. His affections estranged from God, his taste depraved and sensual, he would unavoidably continue, even under the most favourable juncture of outward circumstances, the subject of conflict, want, and misery. A dreary blank would still be left in his bosom. His real necessities would remain unsupplied. The work of mercy must, therefore, be chiefly carried on *within*. The application of that mercy must be felt, and be influential *within*. Prayer becomes then the important channel through which spiritual blessings are conveyed to the soul. The atonement of the cross has removed the curse, and magnified the love of God. The sorrows of Christ have opened a way of blissful access to God, even for the outcast and the exile; but the *enjoyment* of the divine presence can alone belong to him who *loves* the character and the intercourse of God.

Hence the necessity for the teaching, the discipline, the intercourse of the Holy Spirit. Friendship *with* God is the exclusive method of happiness *in* God. But prayer is the great medium by which this friendship is formed and maintained. "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place." "Thou art my portion, O Lord!" "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my God!" "As the hart panteth for the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after God." These, and similar aspirations of the heart, repeatedly felt and cherished, mould as it were the dispositions, and form the taste of the soul. And when to this is added, an habitual reference to God, under all the trials and perplexities of life, it is evident, that an alliance of the most intimate and filial character is gradually formed between God and the once alienated offender.

Yet the disease of the heart is not

healed at once. It is to alteratives, continually supplied, that this disease, at length, though slowly, yields. Such alteratives, meditation and prayer supply. It is, indeed, the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit which renders all this inward process at once healthful and efficient. And when we speak of the discipline of motives, trials, wants, supports, sorrows, joys, we must always presuppose the habitual presence of the Holy Comforter. It is ever "in the Holy Ghost" that prayer sanctifies and renews the heart.

With the aid of these observations, let us now observe the objects which prayer has in view.

First, *That we may obtain mercy.* This is the great blessing which alike belongs to every child of God. I do not imagine the apostle here to refer to mercy as a gift connected with the sinner's original acceptance with God. The mercy to which he refers is rather the mercy sought by a believer, who has already found acceptance in Christ. By faith in Christ he has already "passed from death to life." His relations with God are those of amity and peace.

Hence mercy appears here to designate the whole extent of the believer's personal and habitual intercourse with God. The believer lives in an element of holy mercy. "God is love," absolute and exclusive, to all his *innocent* creation. He is love, infinite and absolute, likewise to his redeemed creation. But he is likewise *mercy* to them. Holy mercy characterizes his dealings with these. They are under a system of compassion, pity, tenderness, forbearance, grace, as well as under a system of pure love. They receive no single blessing or gift; they are relieved from no single privation, but through mercy: and this a mercy as *holy* as the love which is borne to the innocent. Through the sacrifice of Christ, God is "just" as well as "good." His pity is never exercised at the expense of his truth. The harmony of the divine attributes is never disturbed, even when the largest clemency is exerted towards the guilty, or the largest forbearance manifested to the weak. The exercise of this

mercy is therefore perpetual towards the redeemed. It is the atmosphere in which they live. They need its influence every hour and moment. The natural air is not more needful to external respiration, than is this mercy needful to the spiritual existence of the believer's happiness.

Now it is by prayer that he continues the habitual enjoyment of this holy mercy. In the most prosperous circumstances of his natural or moral condition, he is directed alike by the command of God, as by the necessities of his heart, to come to the *throne of grace*. It is there that mercy dispenses all her blessings. The design of God is to create a complete habit of dependence in the bosoms of his children. Their safety, and peace, and joy, are to be ever received as gifts of his bounty. It is "of faith, that it may be by grace."

This principle pervades all their intercourse with God. It is not simply a throne of power, or unmingled love, on which God is seated; but it is a throne of *grace*. Christ is the channel of this *grace*, and the streams descend through him; and they are locked up in the mighty reservoir, except as they flow down to faith. To the strongest, the most fervent, the most endeared, the most favoured children of God, this principle of faith applies. It is at the throne of grace alone they expect their blessings to be dispensed. If in the midst of the summer's heat the sap were suddenly to desert the branches, and to retreat to the stem, the blossoms, the leaves would die. And thus, were the streams cut off which flow from the throne of grace, through the medium of incessant prayer; the graces, the strength, the peace of the soul, would wither and die. It is by faith the Christian lives; and faith is the result of prayer; in which I include all that sweet and healing meditation on divine truth, which is as prayer to the soul; which sanctifies thought, and directs its course, and clears its way into the calmer and better regions of the heavenly world.

The object then expressed under the expression to "obtain mercy," appears to include the whole of those spiritual blessings which belong to the covenant of

grace. It gives a specific character to prayer, as maintained by every believer, in every time, and age, and condition of human life. It is, as it were, the genuine term under which all his blessings are described. He is the child of mercy, under all his relations and circumstances. In the hour of health, and ease, and quietness; in the hour of unchecked meditation; under the smiles of God; under the most glowing expectation of the future, he is the child of mercy. The throne of grace is the well-spring of his peace and joy. Thither he must repair; he has nothing but in the way of mercy; or, in the hour of danger, and want, and sorrow, and guilt, he must still be a suppliant at the throne of grace.

Secondly, But another object of prayer invites our consideration; we are to go to the throne of grace, not only "to obtain mercy," but to "*obtain grace to help in time of need.*" If the term "mercy" refers, as we have seen, to the *universal* nature of prayer, under all events and conditions, as applicable to *all* believers; this expression, "Grace to help in time of need," gives a character of *peculiarity* to it, as applicable to those who are under some distinct and unusual pressure of mind. "Mercy" is the food on which *all* believers live. "Grace to help" is the specific medicine or balm which the case of *individual* suffering may require. "Call upon me in the time of trouble, and I will hear thee, and thou shalt praise me."

God designs to make his people acquainted with their own weakness and misery, and as well with his own kindness, strength, and fidelity. It is in the season and circumstance of adversity, that this design is more immediately and directly accomplished. Hence, "the time of need," in an hour that makes up many a portion of his brief pilgrimage on earth. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." "These are they which have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb." "He hath led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, and

to know what was in thine heart, to do thee good at thy latter end." "I know in very faithfulness thou hast caused me to be troubled."

The lives and experience of God's children have been ever accordant with these declarations. By the shores of the Red Sea; in the howling wilderness; in the dungeon, and the furnace, have the children of God received their best lessons. Their weakness has then evinced the divine strength, and afforded occasion for the exercise of his fidelity and love. It is probable, that the largest efforts of prayer have belonged to affliction. The most intense and piercing cry has "come out of the depths!" The closest union of the heart with Christ has been in the absence of external good. What a productive night, in all probability, was that to Daniel, which he passed in the den of lions! Or what a sacred hour was that, during which the three men of God walked with "the Son of man," amidst the flames of the seven times heated furnace! Or what a season of supplication was that, in which the great Example, as well as the victim of justice, passed "the whole night upon the mountain in prayer!" "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me!" This has been ever the solemn resolution of him, who, bereft of his own resources, and encircled with perils, has thrown himself into the arms of God, and wrestled hard for the mercy which he needed!

And how high and important is this object to which prayer is thus directed! What subject indeed is so interesting as the interchange of faith and grace, as they are connected in the intercourse of God with his children! These are the bright points at which heaven touches earth. These are the streams of light which shed their beams upon the waste, and teach the church that it is not forgotten of its God! How many are daily waiting upon God in this duty and privilege of prayer! When the presence of guilt bears down the heart; when memory recalls the past, and tells of ingratitude, obduracy, and rebellion; when the arrow, the "iron enters into the soul," how urgent is the voice which the advocate *within* then

sends up to the advocate *without!* how fervent, that is, becomes the cry of the Spirit, which "helpeth our infirmities," to the Intercessor, who stands before the everlasting throne! It is "a time of need,"—of great and bitter need. The soul is heavily burdened, and it comes to the throne of grace. The measure of the trial is, indeed, under the limitation of wisdom and love; but the promise of the word, under the agency of the Spirit, is more or less effective to the relief desired! O, if the assurance, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace;" if this or a similar declaration be received into the heart, as well as enter by the ear or the eye, how joyous is the result obtained! The storm dies away, and there is "a great calm."

Or when the privations of life have diminished the objects of social happiness; when death has dried up the fountains which run freely with their clear and salutary waters; when pain and disease have altered the character of existence, and changed the scene of hilarity, and buoyancy, and activity, into the scene of suffering, inactivity, patience, and abstraction from the previous intercourse of life; then to go to the throne of grace, and to draw closer the ties which no privation, nor suffering, nor vicissitude can dissolve, this is to connect "a time of need" with the best and brightest manifestations of mercy and grace to the soul! Many may be the hours of comparative repinings, and of wounded hopes, and of unhealthy wanderings of mind; but these are sometimes exchanged for hours passed at the throne of grace, to which no eye but that of God is witness; hours when Christ speaks, and pain and sorrow are forgotten; hours, when cut off from the din of life, and separated from friends, and left alone with God, every murmuring is yet hushed, and every privation is repaid! hours, when the manifestation of the Redeemer's glory to the soul has shed a calm and a blissful radiance around every prospect, and proved the earnest of that better heritage which is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

These "times of need" brought thus into connexion with "the throne of grace," advance the soul in its knowledge, its strength, and its holiness. They prove the school in which the believer learns his best and highest lessons. Here he pours out his heart to God, and God opens his heart to him. Here he confesses his own misery and unworthiness; and God his Saviour manifests his fullness, and righteousness, and strength. Here the communion of love, and faith, and hope, and joy, strike their deep impressions upon his heart, and conform more or less his habitual feelings and sympathies to those of God and truth!

The *objects* as well as the *duty* of prayer, are thus presented by the apostle to our view.

*Secondly*, But we have yet to examine OUR ENCOURAGEMENT TO FULFIL THEM.

"Let us *therefore*," says the apostle, "come *boldly* to the throne of grace." The words "therefore," and "boldly," lead us to the previous verses of the chapter, and connect the efficacy of prayer with the atonement, intercession, and character of Christ. "We have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." "This great High Priest is touched with the feeling of our infirmities," having been "tempted like as we are;" "*therefore* let us come *boldly* to the throne of grace." The relation of the true believer to Christ thus gives value and hope to the language of prayer.

First, The prayer of a deist, and that of a Christian, are offered under circumstances totally dissimilar. A deist rests upon his own view of the benevolence and power of God. He is ignorant of God's will, of God's estimate of sin, of God's intentions with respect to sin; and he builds his expectations of succour, when he addresses God, upon his own unauthorized exposition, both of God's character and of his own. A Christian, on the contrary, is invited to intercourse with his God on the very testimony of God himself, and under the very shelter and sanction of his immutable promises. He is, as we have already remarked, a child of mercy. He is redeemed by the

blood of an incarnate God. He is "given to Christ," under the seal of a covenant, which is "ordered in all things and sure." In virtue of this gift, he is become the property of Christ. "He is bought with a price." Christ is become his Mediator and his Saviour. United to him by faith, he possesses his life. "Because I live, ye shall live also." He is a "branch of the true vine," and partakes of its fruitfulness and strength! He approaches God "in the fellowship of Christ," as his father. By the indwelling of the eternal Spirit, he feels the emotions of a child, and he cries, "Abba, Father."

It was the office of the high priest, under the Jewish law, both to "offer sacrifices for sins," and to make intercession for the people. This twofold office referred to Christ as the great antitype of the high priest. Christ hath shed his blood as an atonement for sin; and Christ is ascended into the heavens "to make intercession for us." He is gone thither as "our forerunner." He is "gone to prepare a place for us," and "he will come again to receive us to himself," according to that prayer, "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, to behold my glory." Therefore "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Consider the influence of this relation upon the nature of prayer. Under the priesthood and intercession of Christ, prayer is no longer the unauthorized application of a weak and sinful being to the Deity whom he worships; but of whose existence and attributes he has but a confused and conjectural idea. It is the language of a child reconciled and renovated in character by an interposition of mercy and grace on the part of God himself. Under the pressure of his guilt, his weakness, and his sorrow, he comes to the throne of mercy, "knowing whom he has believed." He says with the patriarch of old, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

What an encouragement is this to pray! What an inducement to rest the burden of the heart upon a mediator of infinite strength! to rely for pardon upon the ac-

cepted offering of the blood of the cross, and to shelter the harassed mind beneath the omnipotence of Him who "ever liveth to make intercession for us."

Believer in Christ! mark well the grounds upon which the efficacy of thy prayer depends. Thy very cry of guilt and sorrow, is the result of the Spirit, whose habitation thou art! Thou art the property of God, and under the sure protection of Jesus thou wilt reach thy eternal home. Pray then in faith. Consider thy great High Priest. Think of the virtue of his blood; of the prevalency of his intercession. Come boldly to his throne of grace; unfold all thy heart; lay bare to him its guilt, defilement, weakness, and inconsistency. Implore mercy with incessant repetition of anxiety. "In every time of need seek grace to help." Jesus Christ knows all thy wants, and "has received gifts," that "out of his fulness thou shouldst receive grace for grace." He has opened the way to God. He has unbarred the gates of acceptance. He has overcome death, and hell, and sin; and he bids thee "be of good cheer." Come then with holy confidence into his sanctuary. Attach the highest value to prayer. Deem it to be thy best preservative from sin, and thy best antidote to sorrow. Expect large and full relief at the throne of grace. Remember the eternal covenant; and contemplate the nature of *everlasting* love. Retreat from the accusations of conscience; from the stern voice of the law; from the calumnies of men; from the malice of Satan; from the fears and inconstancy of thine own heart; retreat from all these enemies, and take thy shelter within the sanctuary of the Lord! Thou hast a heritage in the heart of Christ. Thy name is written there, and "thou shalt never be forgotten." "No weapon formed against thee shall prosper;" for "he that toucheth thee, toucheth the apple of an eye." Believe the broad and unembarrassed record, and pursue thy way, "strong in the Lord and the power of his might."

Secondly, But the *character* of Christ is an encouragement to prayer, as well as his priesthood. "He is touched with

a feeling of our infirmities." "He was tempted like as we are, yet without sin." He knows the nature of pain, and grief, and weakness; not simply by his omniscience as God, but by his actual experience as man. He was familiar with all kinds of suffering. He endured poverty, and scorn, and fatigue, and torture. He struggled under infirmity, and passed whole nights in solitary prayer. But perhaps no single expression so completely identifies his capacity for sympathy, as that appellation which long stood recorded on the prophetic page,—“The man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”

All this experience of evil he retains in his remembrance. When he passed into the heavens as the High Priest over the house of God, he carried with him all the sympathies by which his heart had been expanded on earth. He is the same kind, gentle, condescending, generous, faithful friend now as he was then. Christian! contemplate then once more thy encouragement to prayer. Art thou oppressed: art thou discouraged, wearied, unworthy, defiled, inconstant, ungrateful, worldly, doubtful? Art thou low and vile in thine own esteem, and to this self-reproach, do the sorrows of life bring the sad accession of their penalties and privations? Still remember Jesus! His blood has flowed for thy sin; and his righteousness is thy claim to honour and glory! Meantime let his compassionate nature give encouragement to thy struggles and thy prayers. His love cannot change, nor can his knowledge of thy case be at any time obscure. He knows all; he feels all; he will succour all. Never canst thou know his inexhaustible kindness. No human conception can grasp the mighty mystery of his covenant love! But depend, confide, petition, pray. Be ever a suppliant at the throne of grace. Thou art as much the object of his tender care, as if thou wert his lone child in the universe of nature! Cast then thy burden upon him, and say, with “a joy unspeakable and full of glory,” “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”

## SCRIPTURE ILLUSTRATIONS.

NO. V.

“And the Lord said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.”—Gen. iv. 15.

THE learned Shuckford was not only dissatisfied with our usual notion, that God set a mark upon Cain in consequence of his having killed his brother Abel, but he makes himself merry with the ludicrous nature of some of those marks which fancy had appointed to be borne about by him. Without attempting to defend those conjectures, and without adding to the number, I shall merely endeavour to show, that the customary rendering of the passage may be supported.

Among the laws attributed to Menu is the following appointment, which I notice especially, because it is directly attributed to Menu himself, as if it were a genuine tradition received from him; and it describes so powerfully and pathetically the distressed situation of an outcast, that one is led to think it is drawn from the recollection of some real instance, rather than from the foresight of the sufferings of such a supposed criminal.

Crimes in general have been thought, by mankind, susceptible of expiation, more or less, according to the degrees of their guilt: but some are of so flagrant a nature, as to be supposed atrocious beyond expiation. Though murder be usually considered one of those atrocious crimes, and consequently inexpiable; yet there have been instances wherein the criminal was punished by other means than by loss of life. A judicial infliction, of a commutatory kind, seems to have been passed on Cain. Adam was punished by a dying life; Cain by a living death.

For violating the paternal bed,  
Let the mark of a female part be impressed  
ON THE FOREHEAD, WITH A HOT IRON.  
For drinking spirits, a vintner's flag:  
For stealing sacred gold, a dog's foot:  
For murdering a priest, the figure of a headless  
corpse.

With none to eat with them,  
 With none to sacrifice with them ;  
 With none to be allied by marriage to them :  
 Abject, and excluded from all social duties,  
 Let them WANDER OVER THE EARTH ;  
 Branded with *indelible* marks,  
 They shall be deserted by their paternal and  
 maternal relations.  
 Treated by none with affection ;  
 Received by none with respect.  
 Such is the ordinance of Menu.

“ Criminals of all classes, having performed an expiation ordained by law, shall not be *marked on the forehead*, but be condemned to pay the highest fine.” This also is from Menu.

Let us apply these principles in illustration of the history of Cain. Cain had slain Abel his brother; this being a very extraordinary and embarrassing instance of guilt, and perhaps the *first* enormous crime among mankind which required *exemplary* punishment, the Lord thought proper to interpose, and to act as judge on this singularly affecting occasion. Adam might be ignorant of this guilt, ignorant by what process to detect it, and ignorant by what penalty to punish it; but the Lord (metaphorically) hears of it, by the blood which cried from the ground: and he detects it, passes sentence on him—*“Thou art cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother’s blood;”* a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth. And Cain said to the Lord, *“Is my iniquity too great for expiation? Is there no fine, no suffering, short of such a vagabond state, that may be accepted? Behold, thou hast banished me this day from the face of the land where I was born, where my parents dwell, my native country! and from thy presence, also, in thy public worship and institutions; I must now hide myself from all my heart holds dear, being prohibited from approaching my former intimates, and thy venerated altar.*

*I shall be a fugitive, a vagabond on the earth; and any one who findeth me may slay me without compunction, as if I were rather a wild beast than a man.”* The Lord said, “I mentioned an expiation formerly, on account of your crime of ungovernable malice and anger, bidding you lay a sin-offering before the entrance; but then you disregarded that admonition and command. Nevertheless, as I did not take the life of your father, Adam, though forfeited, when I sat in judgment on him, but abated of that rigorous penalty; so I do not design that you should be taken off by sudden death, neither immediately from myself, nor mediately by another. I pronounce, therefore, a heavier sentence on whoever shall destroy Cain. Moreover, to show that Cain is a person suffering under punishment,—since no one else has power to do it; since he resists the justice of his fellow men; since his crime has called me to be his judge, I shall brand his forehead with a mark of his crime; and then, whoever observes this mark will avoid his company; they will not smite him, but they will hold no intercourse with him, fearing his irascible passions may take offence at some unguarded word, and again transport him into a fury, which may issue in bloodshed. Besides this, all mankind, wherever he may endeavour to associate, shall fear to pollute themselves, by conference with him.”—The uneasiness continually arising from this state of sequestration, led the unhappy Cain to seek repose in a distant settlement.

If this conception of the history be just, and if the quotation from Menu be genuine, we have here one of the oldest traditions in the world; in confirmation not only of the history as related in Genesis, but of our public version of the passage.—*Calmet’s Dict. Fragment, 141.*

## SERMON XXXIII.

### IMPORTANT QUESTION.

BY THE REV. THOMAS DALE.

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*“What think ye of Christ?”—Matt. xxii. 24.*

DID ministers of the gospel possess that power, which, among all that have been born of woman, was possessed and exercised by their great Master alone—the power, I mean, of detecting the thoughts and intents of the heart—what various, what conflicting emotions would they probably discover in their hearers at the announcement of a text like this! The idler, who has been casually or mechanically led hither to while away the tedious hours of a wearisome Sabbath—the restless seeker after novelty, who has been beguiled into the house of prayer by an excursive and often unprofitable curiosity, and who though among us is not of us—the formalist, who is bound to the congregation of which he is externally a member, only by the tie of habit and of custom, and who, when uncompromising spirituality of doctrine begins to be unpalatable, only waits for some plausible pretext and ground of objection, that he may avoid the charge of inconsistency and satisfy his own conscience in exchanging one place of worship for another—the incipient but immature Christian, who has just perceived in his own mind the dawn of awakening conviction, but who requires strong stimulants, or imagines that he does, that he may not again relapse into his former darkness and insensibility—and lastly, the believer, the true believer, who desires to hear only of Christ, and values us who are his ministers only so far as we speak of Christ—how differently does the inquiry, “What think ye of Christ?”

strike upon the ear of each! “No hope of any thing to enliven and interest tonight,” mentally ejaculates the idler: “No promise of any thing striking or original in this hackneyed subject,” internally sighs the hunter after novelty: “Another of those discourses,” whispers the formalist, “adapted to the itching ears of our self-styled evangelicals, with whom doctrine is every thing and duty nothing:” “I have no very close interest in this topic,” despondingly rejoins the unconfirmed and incipient Christian, “I am only beginning to think of Christ at all;” while the believer’s heart, penetrated and pervaded as it is by a lively, constant, and individual experience of the excellencies of him who is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether desirable, responds to the question, “What do I think of Christ?” “O could angels teach me their heavenly strains—could I speak in those burning seraphic words, of which Paul testifies that it is not possible for man to utter them—I could not number his marvellous acts, or show forth half his praise; I could not describe what to my soul he already is, much less what I hope he will hereafter be.”

But the inquiry of our text, however likely at once to offend some by exceeding their expectations, and to disappoint others by falling below theirs, is one which the minister of the gospel must propose, must repeat—nay, which he must zealously enforce, on which he must habitually insist; for on the answer

to it, spiritually speaking, ALL depends. They who do not think at all concerning Christ, are both guilty and miserable—they who will not think of him beyond what they can help, are, if possible, even more guilty than miserable—they who seek and strive to think of him, but think wrongly, though not free from guilt, are more miserable than guilty—but they who cultivate and cherish the thought, and seek to be conformed by it to the scriptural model of a true believer, they are the happiest of those who are born to trouble, the least criminal of those who are born in sin and nurtured in iniquity. This much they are now—what they *will* be hereafter, when sorrow is no more, and sin with its pollution is for ever washed away, must be left for the Holy Spirit to develope to their own hearts. We can no more do it than we could transport them to heaven on the wings of the wind: our province only extends to directing them into the path, wherein we have his own assurance that he will meet with them and bless them. O may his presence be so manifested among us this night, that the idler may be excited—the restless man arrested in his search for something new and strange—the formalist aroused from the torpor of erring in his self-complacency—the young Christian stimulated to renewed ardour in the race—and the more advanced believer assured, animated, and encouraged—while *we* ask, and *they* reply to the question, “What think ye of Christ?”

It is possible, it is barely possible, that there may be among us to-night, owing to the inscrutable and mysterious dispensations of Providence, one or two of those most wretched and pitiable persons who do not think of Christ at all; who are so engrossed by the interests, so immersed in the pursuits, so besotted by the pleasures of this delusive and perishing world, that they have scarcely a thought beyond their present existence; and if they can but succeed in their immediate aim and object, will contentedly leave the future to take care of itself—will recklessly mingle with the great mass, and incur the hazard of their common destiny. “Why are they to be molest-

ed,” they ask, “with considerations of righteousness, and temperance, and judgment to come? They are as good as their neighbours, though not righteous overmuch; they abstain, generally speaking, from any excess in either appetite, though they can see no very deadly sin in the pleasures of the table, or even in occasional intoxication, if it be *but* occasional; and, in the end, if their accounts be fairly balanced, the good may very probably preponderate, and if not, they will trust that the weight of the merits of Christ shall be thrown into the scale. At all events, it will be time enough to think of that when the hour of trial shall arrive.” And thus these guilty, infatuated, miserable persons—guilty, though maintaining a decent conformity, in many outward things, to the ordinary regulations and proprieties of the world—infatuated, though perhaps eminent in literature, distinguished in science and devoted to philosophy—miserable, though possessing every external source of happiness that carnal prosperity can furnish—fill up the measure of their years, and are summoned to the bar of judgment without having secured any intercessor, without having provided any advocate. They take their chance—and a dreadful chance it is—a wretched alternative, of which the better part is not to be—of which darkness, nothingness, annihilation, is the brighter side. O could the indigent and afflicted believer, however friendless, however abject and forlorn, however plagued all the day long and chastened every morning, behold these ungodly prospering in the world, increasing in riches according to their spiritual estimate in the sight of God—could the Lazarus at the rich man’s gate full of outward sores, search into the whited sepulchre of that very rich man’s heart—could the believer, languishing in his garret or his hovel, without food to sustain his sinking frame or raiment to protect him from the piercing blasts of winter, look into the gay scenes of festive magnificence, and, with his eyes open to the secrets of the invisible world, behold the men who are at ease in their possessions, sporting and revelling within the very grasp of death, he would

instantly learn acquiescence, if not thankfulness—he would see, indeed, that God is no respecter of persons—he would feel the full significance of that unanswerable inquiry, “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?”

Should there, then, unhappily, be any one here present who, to the question, “What think you of Christ?” is constrained to reply, “I do not think of him at all, excepting on the Sabbath day, when I hear his name at the close of the prayers in the liturgy of the church to which I nominally belong”—should there be such a one, we would exhort him, we would implore him, we would adjure him, by all he holds dear in time and eternity, to ponder, to meditate on his most perilous and critical situation. Either he will allow that the declarations of Scripture are true, or that they are false. If, after long and patient and candid examination, accompanied with earnest prayer for divine teaching and guidance, he has determined that they are the latter, may God forgive and enlighten him, for naught can now avail him but the very finger of God; but if he admits them to be the former—and else wherefore is he here?—then, O let him consider before he signs and seals the sentence of his own condemnation. Not to think of Christ, of the only name given under heaven whereby men can be saved—the only Advocate with the Father—the only Propitiation for our sins—the only Peace-maker between us and God—the only pure Example for our imitation—our only Shepherd to guide us through the dark valley of the shadow of death—the only Captain of our salvation, who has overcome for himself, and can enable *us* to overcome the last enemy—the only availing Pleader at the bar of God—the only Portion of the saints throughout eternity—not to think of Christ, is virtually to renounce all hope of salvation in God’s way—to leave our cause unplead, our sins uncanceled, our enmity unreconciled and unremoved—to array ourselves, in expectation of our Judge, in the polluted garment that he loathes, despising the spotless robe of that righteousness in which

alone we can approach him with any hope of acceptance—to pass through the dark valley without a guide—to meet death in all its terrors—to appear before a heart-searching God, in whose sight all things are naked and open, with all our iniquities fully chronicled in the book of his remembrance, and not one effaced therefrom—to have our eternal portion with rebels, and enemies, and spirits of darkness—*this* it is not to think of Christ. To such a man death is judgment, and judgment is condemnation, and condemnation must be hell. O, then, if there be one indeed here who does not think of Christ *at all*, let him speedily discern his danger, and promptly seek deliverance before the accepted time be exhausted, and the day of salvation is passed. Consider and hear this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.

The next class of persons of whom this question shall be asked, are those who labour under the same misapprehension, yet are surely far less excusable in their error than the persons who were immediately addressed by Christ. These are they who, to the questions, “What think ye of Christ? whose Son is he?” would reply, “The son of David, mortal man, of a mortal mother, of a mortal family, and in nowise differing except in superior moral excellence from his kinsmen, according to the flesh.” There *are* such among those who are called Christians; not increasing, we hope and believe; for the poor and the afflicted, the humble and the penitent, those who desire to find in their religion a source of consolation, encouragement, and hope, discard that cold and lifeless system which can impart no more spiritual consolation and support, than a manual of morals, or a treatise on philosophy. You cannot impose on *them* the breathless form for the living body—you cannot persuade *them* that there is light in the closed eye, and speech in the folded lip, and life in the pulseless heart. But those who are enriched with goods and have need of nothing—those who are wise in their own eyes and righteous in their own sight—those who light the torch of

reason, and imagine, because it casts a gleam across the darkness of their own minds, it will therefore supply the place of the Sun of righteousness in their journey through the wilderness of life and the dark valley of death—these bring themselves, by what process they ought best to know, for they will one day be called to an account, to identify their opinions with that of the Pharisee—"He is," they say, "the son of Mary and Joseph—a man—the best of men—yet still a man of like passions with ourselves." But the Christ of whom such persons speak, is not the Christ of the Scriptures—it is not David's Lord as well as his Son—if man is not the Word which was with God, and was God—it is not Jehovah our righteousness—it is not that holy thing in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily—it is not he, who having by himself purged our sins, is now sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they—it is not our Christ, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, the Lord over all things to his church, God over all, blessed for ever—it is only a more exalted Plato, a more virtuous Socrates, a wiser Confucius, a philosopher above all philosophers, the most disinterested and enlightened of teachers, the most patient of sufferers, the most pure of moralists. And what, after all, is this? It is, at best, the faint and partial outline, not the distinct and perfect shape—it is but the scanty rill, not the fountain of life—it may be a faith for the rich to live in, but rich or poor, who can die in it with peace, or be judged in it with safety?—But *we* desire to look in death to One who has fought with it and overcome it, and to turn in judgment also to One who, though he knew no sin—though he could not know it, because he was God over all, blessed for ever—yet was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

The third class of persons, of whom we make the same inquiry, "What think ye of Christ?" are the idlers, the busy-

bodies, the curious and critical hearers, who are ever on the wing after novelty and originality, attracted and captivated only by the rich colouring of imagination, and the glowing ornaments of rhetoric, and the rushing and impetuous flood of eloquence—who judge of a discourse by the gratification which it affords to their fancy, and the power with which it calls into exercise their reasoning faculties, or the novel conceptions of the mysterious and striking images of the magnificent which it develops to their mental view. Ask *these* what *they* think of Christ, and they will reply, if they dare to tell the truth—"That depends on what we *hear* of him. We always believe he is the Son of God—we always acquiesce in the views which are taken by the church of which we are ostensibly members, concerning his part in our salvation, and his sole ability to accomplish it; but we do not think much of him excepting on the Sabbath—not, if it must be acknowledged, even then, unless he be powerfully and persuasively set forth. Our impressions occasionally, perhaps, abide until the morrow, but are commonly extinct before the third day, and scarcely ever endure throughout the week; but in this we know we are wrong, and intend to do better in future; at all events, we are nearer to heaven than those who totally omit to mingle in the assembly of God's people—nearer than those who deny the Lord that bought them. We already believe something, and hope one day to believe all." But *thus* to think of Christ is, they may be assured, comparatively of little practical utility; it is only so far advantageous as it brings them occasionally within the circle of spiritual knowledge, and this advantage is fearfully counterbalanced by the increasing responsibility it occasions, by the aggravated criminality and condemnation to which it may eventually lead. As to the vain idea that they are nearer to heaven, it makes little difference, I should imagine, to the man who is fainting for thirst in the desert, and is unable to stir a limb, whether the fountain from which he might drink and live is at the distance of one mile or one hundred; and as little to the

soldier who marches with the attacking party to the well defended fortress, whether the ball of death prostrate him in the extreme trenches, or when in act to mount the breach. That which is an advantage in life, may become in death a source of unprecedented bitterness. Take a parallel case. You are subject, we will suppose—we have too much reason for supposing it in *these* times—to the sudden attack of a violent disorder; near your home dwells the physician, and he is prepared with a remedy at a moment's warning; but you are attacked by a violent paroxysm in passing a lonely common or along an unfrequented path, and when your whole frame is paralyzed, when you cannot move a limb, what avails it that your eye is still clear to see the lights gleaming in the distance, which indicate the vicinity of the town you cannot reach! Thus to perish within sight of deliverance only adds double bitterness to the "pang that reaches to the heart." So is he that perishes without a Saviour, though within sound of the church-going bell, and with the Bible in his house, in his chamber, in his hand—but not in his heart. Yea, the word of salvation itself may come too late, as it is too late to bring the medicine when the passage of the throat is obstructed—when the body is convulsed in the agony and collapsing in the insensibility of death!

We are in the next place to ask of the formalist, the man who has been brought up in all the forms and ceremonies of religion—who attends public worship regularly, and has done so from his youth—and would not on any consideration forbear to do so—of whom his neighbours think well, and who, perhaps, although he does not acknowledge it, thinks better of himself—who inly prides himself on being one of the pillars of the church, because he is a zealous advocate of all her rights, and dignities, and privileges, and a determined enemy to innovation of every sort, while there is little or nothing of the power of godliness in his heart—we would say to *you*, "What think *ye* of Christ?" "I think of him," he rejoins, "as the Son of God—as the Sa-

viour of the world—as *my* Saviour." "Nothing can be better," we reply, "so far as it extends. But in what sense is he *your* Saviour?" "I strive," the man will reply, "so far as I know it, to do my duty—I offer to God the best services I can; he will, I am sure, view my failings with an indulgent eye, and whatever the deficiency in my obedience may be, the merits of Christ are sufficient to counterbalance it. What I cannot do for myself he will do for me."—But, stop!—who authorized you to believe that Jesus would be only a partner or an associate in the great work—that while *he* constituted the gold of the image, he would admit *you* to be the clay! When it is said, His blood cleanseth from all sin, do not these words virtually imply that no sin can be effaced and blotted out in any other way? And do not you find sin insinuating itself into your very best performances! Do you not feel that your most acceptable services stand in need of purification and forgiveness? Can you not on reflection accord with the prophet, who said that his righteousness were as filthy rags?—with the apostle, who declared, that when he would do good, evil was present with him? Be not deceived; Christ is either nothing, or all; either there is *no* grace in our salvation, or it is *all* of grace! Whether of these alternatives is correct, judge from the language of the apostle, who declared, "By grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves—it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." And again, "It is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy that we are saved." O, then, remember, that unless you think of Christ as the only Saviour, you have no right to think of him as a Saviour at all; unless you trust him with your services, you have no sufficient warrant to trust him with your sins. Each require to be sprinkled with his atoning blood; and were it not so, your very endeavours to serve God are so mixed and alloyed with imperfection, that these alone would condemn you, supposing your positive and undoubted sins were wholly removed from the light of God's countenance. If,

then, you would rejoice in a good hope, a hope sure and steadfast, let it take tenacious hold on the Rock of ages. While you hope in Christ, hope *only* in him. Lay *all* your services at the foot of his throne. Let your language be, "Neither of man nor by men, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

And now we are to demand of the incipient and immature Christian, in whom the principle of spiritual life is, as it were, struggling hard even for existence—to whom the light of truth appears to be just breaking through the clouds of error, ignorance, worldliness, and selfishness—but it is yet doubtful whether they will be effectually dispersed—"What think *you* of Christ?" "O ask me not," such a person will reply, "what I *do* think of him, but what I *desire* to think of him. I have as yet but a passing view, an occasional glimpse of his manifold excellencies, his divine perfections: one moment he shines out as the sun, and I rejoice in his beams; but again the clouds intervene, and all is dark and cold as before. Occasionally I distinguish a dim and a faint outline of the perfect beauty and symmetry of the gospel system: I see how accurately it delineates my condition—how adequately it provides for my necessities—how, without compromising a single attribute of the Godhead, it does all for me which I was incapable of doing for myself; but this view does not *abide* with me—my knowledge is more theoretical than experimental—and if I think of Christ only as he appears to myself, I cannot think of him as I ought. I therefore employ all legitimate means of correcting that which is erroneous, and enlarging that which is inadequate—I range from church to church in quest of that animating and affecting style of exhortation and entreaty, which shall waken my dormant energies, and rouse into vigilance and activity the sentinel of conscience, who is too often sleeping at his post. I cannot *yet* think of Christ as I would and as I ought; but those powerful portraits of his manifold excellencies which I sometimes enjoy, are to me as the flash of lightning which reveals for an instant

the surrounding scenery, when in an instant all is once more involved in darkness;—and though I cannot perpetuate the vision to my bodily sight, I can at least impress it on my memory, and recall it by the aid of imagination. So, when the voice that thunders or that persuades hath ceased, I can recall, though with diminished vehemence, those thunders of threatening and of error—I can rehearse, though with impaired and impoverished energy, those sweet accents of persuasion and of love—I can feel again the emotions which inspired me while I listened—and the same form of indescribable excellence and beauty is present to my mental view, though more distantly and indistinctly traced." Now, to such a person, if such there be here present, I would say, "You do well if this be *a part*, but you act most mistakenly if this be *all*. It is probable that Jesus reveals himself with far greater power and efficiency in the retirement of secret prayer and meditation than he does in the great congregation; and it is certain that the excitement, whatever it be, is less factitious, and more genuine. That which is contingent on the earnestness or eloquence of the minister of God, even though he be one who resolves to know nothing but Christ and him crucified, cannot be much in itself; whatever the temporary impression may be, all its real and permanent efficiency is derived from the inward teaching and influence of the Holy Spirit. Let us, then, affectionately admonish these, that, while they seek in public, they seek also in private; the discourse, however they may have been impressed, attracted, enchained, transported, penetrated through and through, has done them but little real service, if it has not driven them, so to speak, into the presence of God—yea, to the very foot of the cross. It is not what we think of Christ in a moment of excitement; every dying man, whatever may have been his sentiments in life, feels an Omnipotent Saviour to be all in all; but when health returns, then the brightness of his glories is obscured, the excellency of his salvation is forgotten—and so when the temporary excitement

of a glowing and forcible discourse is passed, our thoughts of Christ may be much what they were before. Let such, then, be not satisfied with answering the question of our text, from the feeling or impression of the moment; let them consider what they *always* think of Christ, not what they *sometimes* think of him. A father is always regarded as a parent, a beloved brother or sister is always the object of like fraternal affection; but is Christ to them always as a father?—is he always as a brother?—is he always as a friend? There should at all times be but one answer to the question, “What think ye of Christ?”

And in the case of the true believer, to whom the question shall now be proposed in the last instance, there *will* be but one answer. Ask *him*, “What think you of Christ,” and the substance of his answer will be, “Christ is precious.” We do not, indeed, assert that the feelings even of the experienced believer will not fluctuate in liveliness and intensity—but, substantially, they will be identical. It will be the sober, solid, settled conviction of his mind, that the favour of Christ is better than life, his love stronger than death, his power superior to the grave. He will think of Christ, who is the Light of Life, much as we do of the natural sun; it sometimes darts forth in full splendour its quickening and enlivening rays—sometimes it retreats behind a cloud—now the face of nature wears a lovelier smile from the influence and manifestation of its brightness, and now all creation seems as though arrayed in mourning for its absence; yet, of all the light that we see, and of all the warmth that we feel, the sun, visible or not, is the sole source. And so the believer thinks of Christ. His heart does not always dance for joy in the immediate experience and effusion of his Saviour’s transcendent love—his hope is not always made to expand like a flower, to display its most gorgeous hues and emit its choicest odours when unfolded by the potent rays of a summer sun; but that heart throbs with life when it does not glow with love, and that flower lives by the sun, though his rays

do not at all times exert sufficient power to unfold its leaves. To speak without a figure, if you demand at any moment of the true believer, what he thinks of Christ? then whatever be his frame of mind and feeling at the moment—whether he be in the valley of humiliation or on the lofty and shining summit of hope and of Christian assurance—whether it be with him the night of heaviness or the morning of joy, he will reply, “What do I think of Christ?” Every blessing recalls him to my mind as the Giver—every deliverance as the Preserver—every sorrow as the Comforter—every sin as the Redeemer! When I unclothe my eyes after the seasonable rest of nightly sleep, it is my first waking thought, or among the first, I have Christ. If I am possessed of riches, Christ is my crowning treasure, my pearl of great price; if I possess them not, his love is better to me than the gold of Ophir, or the merchandise of Tyre, or the palaces of Babylon. My earliest prayers, offered to the God of my salvation, are made acceptable through him! and when I descend into active intercourse with the world, I am perpetually reminded of him. Every event and incident of life brings Christ to my recollection. In all the marks of considerate affection which I receive from members of my social and domestic circle, I discern the adumbration of his purer, and loftier, and more watchful love: if I am blessed, I see him in my prosperity—if I am afflicted, I recognise him in my affliction. I feel my ignorance, but am thus directed to him who is my wisdom: I am wellnigh betrayed, it may be, by insult and provocations, to speak unadvisedly with my lips, but I remember, who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself; I am led into temptation, but I look up to him who is my Deliverer; I am exercised by infirmities, but I think of him who hath borne my sicknesses and infirmities; I hear of those who are suffering, I think of Him who is to me the source of all comfort; I hear of those who are dying, I think of Him who is their life; I am reminded of the departed, I think of Him as the eternal portion of those who have

departed in the Lord. Conscience whippers of ingratitude and rebellion, and fear would anticipate judgment, and a profound sense of my unworthiness would counsel bitter things: but I think of Jesus as the Sacrifice, who has atoned for my transgression—as the Surety who will appear for me in judgment—as the Judge to whom all judgment is committed, but who to *me* will be only a Saviour and Deliverer. Do you ask then, “What I think of Christ?” All that is excellent, estimable, and precious, is concentrated in the name; and O that he were all now, as he will be all hereafter!

And now, brethren, it is for you to answer to yourselves the question, “What do I think of Christ?” By this you may determine what Christ thinks of you: “For them that honour me I will honour; but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.” In the *first* instance, His thoughts towards you are of mercy and of love; for what can be greater love than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends? but if that mercy be outraged, and that love contemned, what may His thoughts of you become? He is the fountain of life to revive, but may he not be the torrent of angry waters, to overwhelm and to destroy? He is the fire to revive and cheer, but may he not, if rejected, become everlasting fire to torment and to consume? O then, if you have not made up your minds to die without Christ, and therefore, to live without him—if you have not determined to try how far other pleas for acquittal and acceptance will avail you, or whether you can appear before God without any plea at all, be not satisfied unless you can return a satisfactory answer to the question, “What think ye of Christ?” Surely there are none here who imitate the fool, that says in his heart there is no God, and does not think of Christ at all? Surely there are none who *do* think of Christ, but not as God? But there *may* be some who think of him only in the moment of excitement; others who think of him occasionally and by halves, as though he would do that for them which they cannot do for themselves, and *this alone*. But all such we would earnestly

and affectionately admonish, that such thoughts of him will not suffice; they may abide a breeze, but they will not endure a storm; we may pass thus through life, but we cannot thus pass through death. Nothing will avail us in the tumultuous and troubled sea but a Rock—nothing will illumine us in the dark valley but a Sun; and who is a Rock, save the Lord—and who is a Sun save the Sun of righteousness alone?

What then, brethren, finally, do *you* think of Christ, not only as he is himself, but as he is to you? Has the power of the Spirit, which is the finger of God, portrayed his precious image in all its living and lovely lineaments on the tablet of your heart? Do you daily realize him as the only propitiation for your sins—the only provider for your wants—your only introducer into the presence of the great King—your only guide through life—your only portion through eternity? A few weeks since, when the evil that is now mercifully mitigated seemed to impend over this devoted city, and they who had long feared for others, began at last to tremble for themselves, what did *you* think of Christ? Did your hearts instinctively turn to him as a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, a shield against the pestilence, a guardian, who would either avert the shaft of death, or transform it into the key that unlocked the portal of eternal glory? O do not await the recurrence of some such fearful visitation to determine where you have placed your confidence, and where you have fixed your love. Let every power of the mind—let every affection of the heart—let every impulse of the will concur and combine to answer this night the important question on which eternity depends—a question which you could not hear, did man propose it with thunders and earthquakes, unless at the same time the still small voice of the Spirit should speak it to the heart, “What think ye of Christ?”

O thou God of mercy, press home this momentous question on the hearts of these thy people, ere that great and terrible day, when thy beloved Son shall be manifested at once in all his splendours

as a Saviour, and all his terrors as a Judge: when it will be demanded of some by the ministers of wrath, ready to bear them to eternal flames; of others by the angels, that do thy bidding, and waft the spirits of the redeemed, the heirs of immortality, to the mansions of the blest. "What think ye of Christ?" O give us grace to think of him now as a Saviour, lest we should hereafter see him only as a Judge! Amen.

## ON POKERY.

INNUMERABLE symptoms appear of a prevailing disposition to contemplate the doctrines of popery with less disgust, and to witness their progress with less alarm, than has ever been known since the Reformation. All the zeal and activity are on one side; and while every absurdity is retained, and every pretension defended, which formerly drew upon popery the indignation and abhorrence of all enlightened Christians, we should be ready to conclude, from the altered state of public feeling, that a system once so obnoxious had undergone some momentous revolution. We seem, on this occasion, to have interpreted in its most literal sense the injunction of "hoping all things, and believing all things." We persist in maintaining, that the adherents to Popery are materially changed, in contradiction to their express disavowal; and while they make a boast of the infallibility of their creed, and the unalterable nature of their religion, we persist in the belief of its having experienced we know not what melioration and improvement. In most instances, when men are deceived, it is the effect of art and contrivance on the part of those who delude them: in this, the deception originates with ourselves; and instead of bearing *false* witness against our neighbour, such is the excess of our candour, that we refuse to credit the unfavourable testimony which he bears of himself.

There is, in the mean time, nothing reciprocal in this strange method of proceeding: we pipe to them, but they will not dance. Our concessions, instead of softening and mollifying, seem to have

no other effect upon them, than to elate their pride and augment their arrogance.

An equal change in the state of feeling towards an object which has itself undergone no alteration whatever, and where the party by which it is displayed profess to adhere to their ancient tenets, it would be difficult to specify. The causes of this singular phenomenon, may partly be ascribed to the length of time which has elapsed since we have had actual experience of the enormous cruelties of the papal system, and to the fancied security we possess against their recurrence; partly to the agitation of a great political question, which seems to have had the effect of identifying the cause of Popery with that of Protestant dissenters. The impression of the heart has, in a manner, spent itself; and in many, its place is occupied by an eagerness to grasp at present advantages, and to lay hold of every expedient, for shaking off the restraints which a narrow and timid policy has imposed. The influence of these circumstances has been much aided by that indifference to religious truth which too often shelters itself under the mask of candour; and to such an extent has this humour been carried, that distinguished leaders in Parliament have not scrupled to represent the controversy between the Papists and the Protestants as turning on obscure and unintelligible points of doctrine, scarcely worth the attention of enlightened minds; while a benighted clergyman of some distinction, has treated the whole subject as of no more importance than the idle disputes agitated by the schoolmen. It was but a few years since, that a celebrated nobleman, in the house of peers, vehemently condemned the oath of abjuration, for applying the term *superstitious* to the doctrine of transubstantiation. In exactly the same spirit, the appellation of Papist is exchanged for Catholic,—a concession which the adherents of the church of Rome well know how to improve, as amounting to little short of a formal surrender of the point at issue. For, if the Papists are really entitled to the name of Catholics, Protestants of every

denomination are involved in the guilt of schism.

This revolution in the feelings of a great portion of the public, has probably been not a little promoted by another cause. The present times are eminently distinguished by the efforts employed for the extension of vital religion: each denomination of Christians has taken its station, and contributed its part towards the diffusion of evangelical sentiments. The consequence has been, that the professors of serious piety are multiplied, and form at present a very conspicuous branch of the community. The space which they occupy in the minds of the public, is not merely proportioned to their numerical importance, still less to their rank in society. It is, in a great measure, derived from the publicity of their proceedings, and the numerous associations for the promotion of pious and benevolent objects, which they have originated and supported. By these means, their discriminating doctrines essential to vital piety, have become better known, and more fully discussed, than heretofore. However beneficial, as to its general effects, such a state of things may have been, one consequence which might be expected, has been the result. The opposition of the enemies of religion has become more virulent, their hatred more heated and inflamed, and they have turned with no small complacency to the contemplation of a system which forms a striking contrast to the object of their detestation.

Popery, in the ordinary state of its profession, combines the form of godliness with a total denial of its power. A heap of unmeaning ceremonies, adapted to fascinate the imagination and engage the senses,—implicit faith in human authority, combined with an utter neglect of divine teaching,—ignorance the most profound, joined to dogmatism the most presumptuous,—a vigilant exclusion of biblical knowledge, together with a total extinction of free inquiry,—present the spectacle of religion, lying in state, sur-

rounded with the silent pomp of death. The very absurdities of such a religion render it less unacceptable to men, whose decided hostility to truth inclines them to view with complacency whatever obscures its beauty, or impedes its operation. Of all the corruptions of Christianity which have prevailed to any considerable extent, Popery presents the most numerous points of contrast to the simple doctrines of the gospel; and just in proportion as it gains ground, the religion of Christ must decline.

On these accounts, though we are far from supposing that Popery, were it triumphant, would allow toleration to any denomination of Protestants, we have the utmost confidence that the professors of evangelical piety would be its first victims. The party most opposed to them, look to Papists as their natural ally, on whose assistance in the suppression of what they are pleased to denominate fanaticism and enthusiasm, they may always depend; they may, therefore, without presumption, promise themselves the distinction conferred on Ulysses, that of being last devoured.

Whether Popery will ever be permitted, in the inscrutable counsels of heaven, again to darken and overspread the land, is an inquiry in which it is foreign to our province to engage. It is certain, that the members of the Romish community are at this moment on the tip-toe of expectation, indulging the most sanguine hopes, suggested by the temper of the times, of soon recovering all that they have lost, and of seeing the pretended rights of their church restored in their full splendour. If any thing can realize such an expectation, it is undoubtedly the torpor and indifference of Protestants, combined with the incredible zeal and activity of Papists; and universal observation shows what these are capable of effecting, how often they compensate the disadvantages arising from paucity of number, as well as almost every kind of inequality.—*By the late Rev. Robert Hall.*

## SERMON XXXIV.

### PROFIT AND LOSS.

BY THE REV. ROBERT NEWTON.

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*‘For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?’—Matt. xvi. 26.*

THIS is, indeed, my friends, one of the most grave, and, at the same time, one of the most interesting questions that ever was proposed. Well and truly has an eminent divine designated this question, by way of eminence, in a discourse which he has published on the text—“The important question.” The question relates not to profit and loss in any ordinary or trivial concerns, which will not and cannot materially affect us, whichever way the scale may happen to turn: the inquiry regards the loss or the gain, the perdition or the salvation, of a man’s own soul. And can any thing in the universe of God be of equal importance to man with the salvation of his own soul? Nor is this question, my friends, of partial interest. It is not addressed particularly or exclusively to any given number of our species; it concerns each and all, learned and unlettered, male and female; for, as every human being has a soul, it must either be saved or lost.

The great Teacher, who spake as never man spake, and knew how forcible are right words, proposes the sentiment of true wisdom which the text contains, by way of inquiry; as though, by this circumstance, he would indirectly teach us that no man, with a rightly-constituted mind, can for a moment question or doubt a statement so self-evident. He employs the interrogatory form of speech, doubtless, that the appeal, which is made to every man’s reason and conscience, as in the sight of God, might be the more forcible and conclusive.

Surely, if the sons of ambition would but seriously reflect on this question, they would find themselves very powerfully arrested in their pursuit of this world’s honour; and if the giddy and the gay would but allow themselves to ponder this great question, they would find themselves checked in their eager attempts after this world’s pleasure; and were the man of business, who has set his heart on the acquisition of substance and wealth, or could the miser, whose name is by interpretation miserable, but allow himself to consider this question, they would pause and ask themselves, Am I, then, after all, making a good bargain? “For what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

It is, however, true that persons may professedly admit the truth, and wisdom, and propriety of any given maxim or sentiment, and yet it is a thing widely different from this to act habitually under its influence: in other words, a proposition may be theoretically admitted when it is practically denied; and if we do not most egregiously mistake, this is precisely the case with multitudes around us from day to day, who admit the wisdom and the truth of the maxim of the text—who know the subject carries conviction on the very face of it; but yet, how are they acting? Why, they are living from day to day, either as if they thought, after all, that they had no souls to be saved or lost, or as though there

were some sort of impression that it would turn out in the sequel that the world would be more valuable than their soul, and, therefore, they are bartering their souls for the world.

Some who hear me know very well that, at the time the text was proposed, commerce was not carried on or conducted as in these days, through any circulating medium like money, but in the way of bartering—simply exchanging one thing for another—disposing of one thing for another. Now, if this be the reference, then, what our Saviour would teach us is this, that the soul of man is of a nature so excellent, and of a value so great, that there is nothing in this world that can be proposed and accepted as an equivalent—that the world itself, the whole of it, is not an equivalent, and that the man who would exchange his soul even for a world would be a loser—that every item in the account would ultimately be put down on the side of loss—loss, all loss—a loss ruinous and fatal.

The maxim of the text may be illustrated by the following propositions: MAN IS A BEING OF WORTH—HE HAS A SOUL—THAT SOUL IS OF UNSPEAKABLE VALUE: INVALUABLE AS IS THE SOUL OF MAN, THERE IS AN AWFUL POSSIBILITY THAT IT MAY BE LOST; FOR SUCH A LOSS THE ACQUISITION OF A WORLD IS NO COMPENSATION.

We say, then, that MAN IS A BEING OF WORTH. And, indeed, the superiority, the dignity of man is very strikingly indicated by *the form and structure of his body*. The different orders of animals with which he is surrounded on the face of this earth, are grovelling; they are prone to the earth from which they derived their existence, and to which they tend: but how differently formed is man! Man is distinguished with an erect form—man is ennobled with a majestic countenance, which our poet has, not without reason, beautifully designated—

“The human face divine!”

A countenance to look above this world and all it contains. Moreover, man is gifted with the power of articulate speech. Yet it is not to the body, though, in regard to that, every man may say, “I am fear-

fully and wonderfully made,”—it is not, I say, to the body that man is indebted for his dignity, importance, and worth; for the body, after all, has appetites in common with animal nature, and tends to the dust out of which it was formed, and to which it must return. We say, then, that the soul is the man; the body is but the clay tenement, the soul is the deathless inhabitant; the body is but the material casket, the soul is the precious sparkling jewel that is contained within; the body is intimately allied to the earth, the soul claims kindred with on high!

I argue the excellence, and consequently the worth, of the human soul, from *the spirituality of its nature*. To attempt a definition of the soul, of its essence, is not the province of the Christian preacher. This he most willingly leaves to the mere metaphysician, who may amuse himself and others as long as he pleases with definitions of that sort. Certainly, whatever the soul be, it is not material; it does not consist of any modification, form, or arrangement of air, earth, fire, or water; for, although the soul can act through the bodily material organs, yet it is, in its own nature, quite distinct and independent, for this plain, obvious reason—the soul is essentially a thinking being; it has the power of rational thought. Rational thought is not the property of matter: make as many experiments as you please, and try into how many forms and arrangements matter may be put, and into how many it is capable of being thrown,—and yet, after all these modifications and transformations, you will find that mere matter is senseless, thoughtless matter still; whereas the soul thinks, and must, therefore, be something distinct from matter, as thought is not a property of matter.

The same thing is very strongly implied in the rapidity of the movements of mind. Matter is sluggish and inert. Light travels very rapidly compared with other things; but at what a very tardy rate does light travel compared with thought! Does not this show that there is an essential difference between matter and mind? The same thing may justly be inferred from the power of abstraction of which the

soul is capable; for, though the soul acts through the medium of bodily organs, yet, when it chooses, it can abstract itself and act independently of these organs. Moreover, some tell us, and we give them credit, that the soul performs operations while all the external senses are dormant; and, in some cases, there are such distinct characters and traces left, if I may so speak, on the leaves of memory, that persons can actually read all these operations in their waking moments. And what do the phenomena of dreaming prove, but that the soul can and does act independently of the organs of the body? Then, certainly, the same thing is proved by the Mosaic account of the creation of the soul. The body was formed out of the dust of the ground, and "the Lord God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became"—what? what he was not before—"a living soul." The soul is a spark, not of earthly or material flame—the soul sprang forth from God, and God is, therefore, designated in this book, "The Father of spirits:" then, in this book, it is also written—and that is authority to which we reverently bow—"There is a spirit in man, and the Spirit of the Almighty gave him understanding."

Is the soul of man of a nature so excellent? Is the soul of man spiritual, immaterial? Why, then, how does such an exalted nature rise in excellence, dignity, and worth, above all the modifications of this world's gross and senseless materials?

I argue, secondly, the excellence, and, consequently, the worth of the human soul, from *its lofty capacities, from its vast powers and unrivalled attributes*. What a wondrous creature is the soul of man! It possesses powers of large discourse, capable of looking before and after—powers intellectual and sentient—powers instinctive and excogitative—powers of understanding to know, of will to determine, of sensibility to feel, of memory to retain, and of conscience, too, to decide on its own operations. To the soul of man seems to belong the principle of interminable progression. Who shall say to what an extent it may travel? who

shall say what are its high capabilities of knowledge and enjoyment? Its wondrous powers may be seen in the invention and progress of the arts and sciences; and yet I am one of those who are disposed to think that both are yet in their infancy; and, notwithstanding all that has been done by men of genius and acquirement, there may rise up others of powers more extensive and stupendous, and genius more bright, to make fresh discoveries, and to improve upon the discoveries of those that have preceded them, beyond any thing that we can conceive. Of what is not the soul of man capable? It can extend its survey over the whole circuit of creation; it can ransack all nature, and analyze its properties and ascertain its powers! What cannot the soul of man do? It can travel through illimitable space—it can circumnavigate the globe. It can do more. The soul of man can mount up to other worlds, and then it can employ its operations, and count their numbers, and ascertain their distances, and calculate their movements. Wondrous being! The soul of man can do more still. The soul of man can mount up from the loftiest works of nature to the God of nature himself! For God was the soul formed—of God is the soul capable; and short of him no rest can the soul of man find or enjoy! And, although morally speaking, this soul is not now what it once was—although it is not now the pure and holy spirit it was when it sprang forth from its great Originator, yet still there is the capacity; still there is something that cannot be satisfied of any thing short of God. It is a matter of conscience to any man, that he is formed for God; that there is something within him capable of knowing, enjoying, and serving Him for ever and ever.

Now, what is there in this world to compare with the soul of man? Is it the "regent of day," as he has been called—the centre of the system—the most glorious of all the visible objects in the universe? But what is the sun, even in his meridian splendour? Why, he is unconscious of his own glory; he does not know to how many myriads of human

beings he conveys light, and heat, and blessing. The sun has no power of self-determination; he acts necessarily according to the laws which the Governor of the universe has imposed. The sun! Why, the sun knows nothing—the sun enjoys nothing—the sun, in his noonday splendour, is a senseless ball, compared with the soul of the meanest slave, possessing, as it does, the high attributes of intelligence, of sensibility, and spirituality. Wondrous creature! O, what a being to possess such a soul!

I argue the excellence, and, consequently, the worth of the human soul, in the third place, from *its duration*. Wondrous as is this being; high as are its capacities, vast as are its powers, if it were destined very soon to be blotted out of existence, and be as though it never had been, how would it then dwindle into insignificance! But now the soul of man is destined to an unending existence. I think this might be fairly argued from the immateriality of its nature: on the admission of the one, I think the other follows by necessary consequence. For instance, a spiritual nature, you know, cannot be destroyed by any influence of corruption—a spiritual essence cannot be dissolved by decomposition of parts—an immaterial nature cannot be destroyed by external violence. By this argument, then, we must arrive at the conclusion, that the soul must still exist—that it is never to die. The same thing may justly be inferred from the vast powers and capacities of the soul. The only wise God never acts without reason and design, not unworthy of himself; and is it conceivable that he would have made man so wonderful, so stupendous, in his capacities and powers, if he had not intended that he should exist longer than threescore years and ten? Would the vessel have been so richly freighted if he, who was the framer of that vessel and its charterer, had determined it should become a total wreck as soon as she had sailed across the stream—the narrow stream of time? No, my brethren.

Besides, the desire of perpetuity of being—which is a matter of conscious-

ness to all—I believe is a strong indication of the same truth. During my travels in some parts of this country, and in the sister island, I have sometimes, when I had a few moments to spare, taken a pen-sive walk into the churchyard; and there, upon the humble stone, in rude sculpture, I have seen the names of this man, and that woman, and of such a son and daughter, who once, like myself, were instinct with life. And here, I have thought, was an indication of immortality. No man wishes, however humble his situation, to be forgotten—never wishes to be blotted out of being. There is the desire, then, after an endless existence. And do you think that He who framed us would have given us this desire after a thing while that thing itself was altogether deceptive and unreal? And, then, we all know, from what we feel in ourselves, that this cannot be the native region of the soul; that, in this world, its proper element is not to be found—that it does not find here any thing congenial to its nature, or equal to its cravings and capacities; it is obviously formed for a good which this world does not contain. But does not this go to presume immortality, a nobler and higher state of things?

Then the conviction of responsibility, which we all have, proves the same thing. Yes, a conviction of responsibility; for I should pause before I credited any infidel that would tell me, “I have got rid of it; such a thing never crosses my mind.” Ah, they may say this in the seasons of wealth and of prosperity; they say very different things to me in the hour of sickness and on the approach of death. They tell me then that they were acting the hypocrite all the time—that they had a conscience all the while—and although they tried to administer opiates by infidelity, and sometimes by sensuality, they still felt that they had a conviction of accountability. And what does that imply? Immortality! But still the unending duration of the soul is not a settlement of the question. The grand question is, “What saith the Scriptures?” Here we are always safe when we confine our-

selves to "What saith the Lord?" There is a Being who only hath immortality, and who has, as we here learn for certain, made the soul of man immortal. Life and immortality are brought clearly and fully to light by the gospel.

What an overwhelming thought is this! Brethren, do you frequently indulge in it? There is something in you and in me, that in being must always be!—an existence commensurate with eternity, which shall never, never terminate. Awful thought! Yonder sun shall be quenched in total and final darkness, and yonder moon shall for ever withdraw her shining, and the stars of heaven shall fall from their orbits, the universe shall dissolve with fervent heat, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up; but the soul shall live when all created nature shall die—the soul shall blaze out in immortality, and shall out-live

"The wreck of matter and the crash of worlds!"

There is another argument which will, perhaps, be called the trite and common argument in the mouth of every one; but, be that as it may, let all such know that every thing new in Christianity is false. Revealed truth is essentially the same; and truth is not the less valuable because it is either old or common. Would to God it were more common than it is! What is the argument, then, my friends? I argue the worth of the soul from the price which has been paid for its redemption. I have already intimated that the soul of man is not now the being it once was. God created man upright and perfect; but by transgression he fell—the crown tumbled from his head, and his honour lies in the dust—the soul is loaded with guilt and blackened with its crimes; and man cannot redeem his own soul. The redemption of the soul was too precious for man to effect—the price required was too great, and no created being could redeem it. Our poet of Paradise has, indeed, supposed a case—and it may pass for poetry; but, depend upon it, it is not theology. He absolutely supposes the Divine Being instituting an inquiry among the angelic orders:

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"Say, heavenly powers! where shall we find such love?

Which of ye will be mortal to redeem  
Man's mortal crime, the just, the unjust to save?

Dwells in all heaven charity so dear?

He asked; but all the heavenly choir stood mute,

And silence was in heaven."

What, then, did the poet Milton imagine, that if Gabriel had said, "Lo, here am I, send me; I am willing, for the sake of man, to assume his nature, to live, and suffer, and die, 'the just, the unjust to save!'"—did the poet imagine that the death of Gabriel in a human body would have effected the redemption of the soul of man? The thing was impossible. No mere creature could have effected the redemption of the souls of myriads of men. Man was redeemed, but by what? Let St. Peter tell. We were "not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold"—no, no; there had been no proportion between the worth of that to be redeemed and the price, in that case—"not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot!" A price this, O how precious! Who can conceive the preciousness of the blood of Christ? A price beyond all power of angels and of men to compute!

The argument is this: If the sum paid down was so incalculably great, what, in the estimation of the Divine Being, must have been the worth of the soul which was redeemed by such a price? But, then, that redemption might be carried into practical effect, what a wonderful diversity of means has God instituted! For this he has given us the word of his truth—for this he has sent down the Spirit of his grace—for this he has appointed the holy Sabbath—for this he has appointed the service of the sanctuary—for this he has commissioned his ministers—for this he has given us line upon line, and precept upon precept—for this the Spirit strives—for this the ordinances of his grace are dispensed—for this the successive seasons revolve—for this the

sun gives his light—for this the willing earth continues her increase—and for this time is continued, and human life is prolonged, and death is delayed: all this that the soul may be saved! O, man, O, woman, reverence thyself! Thou hast a soul—a soul whose interests are immeasurable, whose worth is incalculable—reverence thyself! And, secondly, tremble for thyself; for, invaluable as is thy soul, it may by possibility be lost! Now, when our Lord speaks of the loss of the soul, he does not speak of the loss of its existence, but the loss of its well-being, the loss of all that for which it would be desirable to have a soul. To be lost is to be cast away; to be lost is to be undone; to be lost is to perish!

Now, there are two great ideas comprehended here; and I shall just name them. The loss of the soul implies the privation of all the good of which a soul is capable in this world and in the next—the loss of pardon, the loss of peace, the loss of holiness, the loss of happiness, and the loss of the beatific vision; the loss of the crown of glory, and the palm of victory; the loss of the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; the loss of the rivers of pleasure which are at God's right hand: it is to be shut out from happiness, and from heaven, and from hope. And not only does the loss of the soul imply the loss of all the good, but the endurance of all the evil of which the soul is capable. We cannot tell how much that is. Sin and misery are in close neighbourhood—they go hand in hand. Who can tell what some souls endure in this world, in the corrodings of guilt, and the lashings of an accusing conscience! May the gracious God forbid that any of us should ever know, by experience, what it is to lose the soul; to be where there is no eye to pity, no cordial to relieve, no ray of hope to cheer, and where justice and self-condemning guilt consign the lost soul to eternal perdition! God has said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die!" Is not the traveller in danger of losing his life, who, bewildered in the darkness of midnight, has turned out of the right way

into a place of pitfalls? But is not the sinner who has forsaken the royal road of truth and holiness, wandered into the mazes of error, and tumbled into the ditches of wickedness, is he not in danger of losing his soul for ever?

Where this event takes place, there are sad and awful aggravations: and this is one; it is the man's own deed; "For what is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" If the soul be lost, it is not the act of his neighbour, or of his minister; it is the man's own act. This will be the terrible scourge of lost souls in perdition. "I did it; it was my own act; I bartered with my soul!" And, remember, this is an incalculable loss. A man may lose property; he may calculate how much: a man may lose friends; he knows how many: but, O, if the soul be lost, who can tell the amount of that loss? If the soul perish, it is, once more, an irreparable loss—a loss that cannot be retrieved. A man may lose health, and yet, by the blessing of Providence upon medical aid, he may become more healthy than before; a man may lose property—his all in the world—and yet, by industry, and the smile of Providence, he may become richer than before; a man may lose friends—God may raise up others in their room; but, O, if the soul is lost, it is lost not for a day, a month, or a year, but for eternity; and it is that word "eternity," which gives emphasis to bliss or wo, to ease or pain, to hell or heaven. It is eternity which makes a hell of hell, and a heaven of heaven!

I think, my friends, by this time you are prepared for the third proposition, and for its adoption—THAT, FOR SUCH A LOSS, THE ACQUISITION OF A WORLD WOULD BE NO RECOMPENSE. "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" You will observe, that our Lord does not mean by this to denounce a due regard to worldly business, or the acquisition of property; but still he teaches us that there is danger; because, when riches increase, a man is apt to set his heart

upon them. When properly viewed, riches are a great blessing; where this is the case, the rich man is a blessing to all around him, and he blesses others while Providence is blessing him. Again, when our Saviour speaks of a man *gaining the whole world*, he is not to be understood as though that were literally possible. You know there was a man that was called Alexander the Great: he was in many things Alexander the Little, and was a wretched slave to his own unsanctified passions: however, it was said that this man had conquered the whole world; he never saw the whole world. So, here, a man cannot strictly gain the whole world; and the expression means that he has gained every thing of the world that he can possibly enjoy.

Let us, then, suppose a case. Here is a man that has gained all the honours of the world that he can enjoy—the honour of titles, the honour of victory, the honour of conquest. He has, moreover, the honour of empire, of a sceptre, of a throne, and of a crown: this is the golden termination; he can go no higher; he has wealth sufficiently ample to support his imperial dignity—wealth in abundance: he has, in addition to this, a most vigorous constitution; he has all pleasure at his command, and he lives according to the sight of his eyes day by day: he has all this at the expense of religion and the loss of his soul; and where is the profit? He has had the honours that are empty and transitory—a feeble taper, that death will soon put out with his extinguisher—and he has had them at the expense of the honour that cometh from God. He has had sensual pleasure, as much of it as he can enjoy; but then it degrades, it leaves behind it the sting, and the poison, and the pain; and he has had this at the expense of the pure, satisfying, and permanent pleasure which religion inspires, and which springs from the well of life. Where is the profit? He has had the world's wealth, at the expense of true riches; the riches of wisdom, of holiness, of reconciliation and joy; the riches that a man is to carry with him beyond this world; the riches of which the rude hand of death cannot rob a man; the riches

that are to circulate and pass current in eternity: these he has lost!

There lived a man that was clothed splendidly, and fared sumptuously; but, then, he lived to enjoy himself. He died and was buried, and in hell he lifted up his eyes: he gained the world, and lost his soul. Where was the profit? There lived another man: he, too, gained the world, and lost his soul. He had increased his goods, and filled his barns with store, till the poor wretch cried out, "What shall I do?" "Do!" "What shall I do?" O, if the man were here, I should tell him what to do. There is enough to do. Give to support the cause of God; visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction. "Do!" Clothe the naked, feed the hungry. Do good; support the cause of God. But no; not he! He will do something, however: what does he? Why, he pulls down his barns; he builds greater, and there he bestows his goods: and then he says to his soul, "Soul, take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry; thou hast much goods laid up"—Where? In heaven? Were his heart and his treasure there? No, no! His goods were laid up in the barns he had built. Was ever folly so egregious as this! God called him a "fool;" and he shall not be miscalled by me: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" The man gained the world, but he lost his soul! "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." Where was the profit?

I am willing, my friends, to indulge in supposition on this subject; for what is the supposition that truth will not justify? I will suppose a man to be the emperor of the universe; literally to be the lord of this world; and that all the tribes, and kindreds, and languages, and classes acknowledge his sway: he is the emperor of the world; he has it all, as much as he can enjoy or possess. He has all this, to the loss of religion and of his soul. How, then, stands the question? How little of the world can he ever see; how little can he ever enjoy? Why, the

man cannot absolutely wear two crowns, conveniently to himself; he cannot occupy even two of his royal palaces at the same time! Look, for a moment, at the qualities of the soul and the world! The world is material, the soul is spiritual; the world is limited, the soul has desires and capacities that are boundless—the world is too little for it! What is there here that is suited to its nature? The world is gross and senseless, the soul is sentient and rational; the world is perishable, the soul is imperishable, and shall never die: he gains the world, and loses his soul; and where is the profit?

I will indulge in supposition yet again; and I will suppose, if you please, a human being coeval with the world, and that that human being is to continue as long as the world endures—he would be about six thousand years old now; but his eye has not become dim—his faculties and powers of enjoyment have not failed, and he is to be satiated with pleasure, and he is to remain in the world while it continues to exist. He has had all he can desire or possess from its creation, he has had all the honour and wealth which has been enjoyed by this world's teeming population through the whole period of its existence; but now this world consumes, and he expires! How stands the case? He has had the world for time; he has lost his soul for eternity! Where is the profit? I remember how beautifully this idea is illustrated by the ever-memorable Addison, in one of the papers in "The Spectator," where he shows, with much beauty and convincing truth, that one soul is capable of more enjoyment to eternity than could possibly be enjoyed by any given number of souls for any limited period. There is no proportion between the one and the other. There is some proportion between a particle of matter and the globe; there is some proportion between a drop of water and the ocean; but there can be none between the little drop of time and the shoreless, fathomless ocean of eternity. The man, then, that gains the whole world for time, and loses his soul for eternity, can gain no profit.

But I will indulge in supposition still farther; and truth shall still justify the

supposition. I will, then, suppose mere worlds than one, and you may go on, in your imagination, adding world to world, and system to system, to any given number: and suppose a man to be able to call them all his own; they are all acknowledged to be his; he has them, but he has them to the loss of his soul: how stands the case? Let all these worlds be put into one scale, and the soul into the other; let impartial justice hold the balance; let wisdom direct the process; let truth pronounce the decision, and we know what the language will be:—"World on world, one soul outweighs them all!"

Thus far have I illustrated the statement in the text: "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Are, then, these things so? So they are, my brethren; for these, after all, are the words of truth and soberness.

We learn, then, in the first place, that it must be man's first interest and highest duty, to regard the salvation of his soul as the one great business of his life. What is there that deserves comparison with it, that can occupy our thoughts or engage our attention? Our souls are our all; they are our understanding; they are our life; they are our happiness! By what strange infatuation, then; by what perversity and folly, do you prefer the interests of the world to those of the soul? You pronounce condemnation on Judas, who betrayed his Master for forty pieces of silver: take heed, sinner, lest thou sell thy soul for a still more worthless sum! You condemn Esau, who sold his temporal birth-right for a mess of pottage: beware, sinner, lest thou sell thy soul for a momentary gratification! O, but dost thou begin to see that the soul is valuable? Then, that is one point gained. Dost thou begin to see that thy soul is in peril? That is another point gained. Dost thou see that thou canst not save thyself; and dost thou ask, What must I do? I tell thee, then, there is one who is able and willing to save thee, and his name is Jesus. To save thee he lived, and died, and rose

again; to save thee, he makes intercession. O, that every poor sinner would flee, without delay—sinful, guilty, polluted, perishing as they are—into his outstretched arms of love! What does Jesus say? “Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.” Although you have been so unworthy, so guilty, so base, so ungrateful; although you have so long turned a deaf ear to his call, he says, “Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.” Why, not to be cast out, is to be taken in; not to be excluded, is to be admitted: and he will admit you into his glorious kingdom; you shall be justified and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Then, O then, in every period of your religious experience, whenever the world would allure; whenever temptation would solicit; whenever riches would entice, remember the statement of the text:—“What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” Let this thrill through the heart while it vibrates on the ear, and then shall you, by the grace of God, pass through things temporal so as not to lose the things that are eternal; and, with heaven in reserve, you shall have heaven begun below!

Finally: if the soul be so valuable, those who are in a state of salvation ought to exert themselves to the utmost to promote the salvation of others. That man does not know the worth of his own soul, who does not attach value to the souls of others; that man does not taste the sweets of religion himself, who would not wish his fellow sinners to be blessed as he is blessed; that man is not in the way of heaven, who is not anxious to take others along with him; nor has he any reason to expect happiness there, if he would wish to go alone. My friends, the religion of Jesus Christ is diffusive; and if we know the worth of our own souls, we shall duly value the souls of others. If we possess the means of grace, and enjoy the blessings of salvation ourselves, we should wish all our fellow creatures to be partakers of like precious faith. Well,

then, if these be your sentiments, and if these be your feelings, I know that a liberal heart, devising liberal things, will influence liberal hands to do liberal things; and you will, in contributing to assist the trustees of this chapel upon the present occasion, act worthy of your religious character, and the pious and generous feelings that now occupy your heart. Amen.

## SCRIPTURE DIFFICULTIES.

NO. VII.

### THE WITCH OF ENDOR.

Witch of Endor, in *Biblical History*, is a woman who had a familiar spirit, and who was employed by Saul to consult the deceased Samuel concerning the issue of his contest with the Philistines. See 1 Sam. xxviii.

The explication of this part of sacred history has greatly perplexed commentators and critics. Some, in deference to the authority of the ancient fathers of the Christian church, who ascribed to magicians and necromancers the power of calling up the souls of the dead, have given a literal interpretation of this history, and supposed that Samuel actually appeared to Saul. But to this opinion it has been justly objected, that it is repugnant to the order of the natural world, and to the doctrines of revelation respecting the state of the dead. It cannot be supposed consistent with a just reverence of God, to believe that he has subjected the souls of the departed, not excepting those of the most eminent saints and prophets, to be remanded back from their distinct abodes, by the practice of the most execrable rites, and at the call of some of the vilest of mortals, and compelled to reveal what he has seen fit to conceal. Natural reason confirms the suffrage of Scripture, when it brands the whole magic art, to which evocations of the dead, and all necromantic divinations appertain, as founded in imposture.

Others, who cannot admit that witches are able to disturb the souls of good men, much less of prophets, are nevertheless of opinion, that these wretched women

can cause the devil to counterfeit the souls of the dead; and that, in the case before us, an evil spirit appeared before Saul, in the likeness of Samuel. (See Patrick on 1 Sam. xxviii. 12.) But this opinion gives an unwarrantable advantage for the support of idolatry, to those impostures that were practised by heathen sorcerers and diviners. Besides, the very apparition of a spiritual and incorporeal being, and the gift of prophecy, are real miracles, and cannot take place but by divine appointment; and, lastly, the historian calls the appearance to Saul, Samuel, which he could not do with truth, if it were no other than the devil, who here appears, not as a tempter, but as a very severe reprove of impiety and wickedness.

Many learned men have, therefore, maintained, that it was neither Samuel, nor an evil spirit, who here appeared to Saul; but that the whole was the work of human imposture. In support of this opinion it may be pleaded, that the woman to whom Saul applied to call up Samuel was merely a ventriloquist, possessing an art very serviceable to those who counterfeited the answers of the dead. This opinion, however, like the foregoing one, contradicts the sacred historian, who not only represents the Pythoness as affirming, but himself affirms, that she saw Samuel, and that Samuel spoke to Saul: nor has he dropped the least hint that it was not the real Samuel of whom he was speaking.

Others have supposed, that the appearance of Samuel to Saul was a divine miracle; though, whether the miracle consisted in raising Samuel, or in presenting an image or representation of him before Saul, it is not necessary to determine. Accordingly, the apparition must be ascribed, not to the power of enchantment, but to the immediate appointment of God, as a rebuke and punishment to Saul. This opinion is maintained by Dr. Waterland, in his *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 267, and defended by Dr. Delany, in his *Life of David*; but combated by Dr. Chandler, with objections which, as far as they affect the Scripture history of the matter,

are answered or obviated by Mr. Farmer, in his *Dissertation on Miracles*, p. 486.

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SALE OF CHILDREN BY THEIR MOTHERS.

MALABAR children are generally a very cheap commodity at Anjengo. At the end of the rainy season, when there was no particular scarcity in the interior country, (says Mr. Forbes, in his *Oriental Memoirs*,) I purchased a boy and girl, of about eight or nine years of age, as a present to a lady at Bombay, for less money than a couple of pigs in England. I bought the young couple, laid in two months provision of rice and salt fish for their voyage, and gave to each of them four changes of cotton garments, all for the sum of twenty rupees, or fifty shillings. English humanity must not pass a censure on this transaction! It was a happy purchase for the children; they were relieved from hunger and nakedness, and sent to an amiable mistress, who brought them up tenderly, and, on leaving India, provided for their future comfort; whereas, had I refused to buy them, they would assuredly have been sold to another, and probably have experienced a miserable bondage with some Portuguese Christian, whom we do not reckon among the most merciful task-masters.

A circumstance of this kind happened to myself. Sitting one morning in my veranda, a young fish-woman brought a basket of mullets for sale: while the servant was disposing of them, she asked me to purchase a fine boy, two years of age, then in her arms. On my upbraiding her for want of maternal affection, she replied, with a smile, that she expected another in a few weeks, and, as she could not manage two, she made me the first offer of her boy, whom she would part with for a rupee. She came a few days afterwards with a basket of fish, but had just sold her child to Signior Manuel Rodriguez, the Portuguese linguist; who, though a man of property and a Christian, had thought it necessary to lower the price to half a rupee. Thus did this young woman, without remorse, dispose of an only child for fifteen pence.

## SERMON XXXV.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSIDERATION.

BY THE REV. ANDREW REED, D.D.

“O that they would consider their latter end.”—Deut. xxxii. 29.

WE have arrived, my dear brethren, at the last service of the last Sabbath of another year. Such a position is calculated to nourish and awaken within us many serious reflections. One can hardly perceive oneself to be so circumstanced without indulging in serious contemplations. It is proper at such a time for the mind to be thrown back on the past, to consider the year and the dispensations that have gone over us, and to desire to receive from the recollection just and holy impressions. It is proper in such a position to cherish in our minds a lively sense of the divine mercy. He who feels that he stands thus a debtor, and remains altogether insensible to the goodness of God, remains insensible to all just reflections, remains insensible to all attainments in the divine life.

It is proper for us to think of the loving-kindness of the Lord; to admire and to celebrate his goodness, to acknowledge, that after all our expressions, and all our thoughts, the greatness of that goodness exceeds our expressions, and exceeds our thoughts likewise.

It must be difficult for us to regard our circumstances without some increasing sense of our imperfections and of our sinfulness. The mind, therefore, may be suitably directed to penitential and renewed confession of sin. The year that is dying away, brethren, O what a witness has it been of our remissness before God! If it were allowed to pass away from us without our seeking the forgive-

ness of God and life in his favour, what a recording witness would it be against us of our sins, and it would be for a *remembrance* of our sin before God!

On this day, and at such a time, then, it is proper to remember our faults, and to remember our privileges. We ought to acknowledge the sin of the heart and the sin of the tongue, and to fall once more, with greater self-abasement than ever, under the fountain which is still open to take away all sin.

But the exercise of mind commended to us in our text is not either of these, but an entire recognition of them all—it is that of consideration, and of consideration as it is made to bear on our present state before God, and on all our future prospects of an undying life. And it is made the more interesting to us because it is addressed to us from the lips of the living Jehovah, as expressive of his tender regard for our real welfare, and is designed to convey to our own minds—naturally inconsiderate—the most suitable reflections—reflections which may contribute to our present and to our endless peace. “O that they would consider their latter end!”

There are two things then in these words. In the *first* place, **THERE IS THE EVENT CONTEMPLATED:** in the *second* place, **THERE IS THE CONSIDERATION WHICH IT DEMANDS.** The event contemplated is our latter end; the consideration which it demands arises from a variety of circumstances, some of those circumstances bearing on our pre-

sent state, and most of them bearing on that state which is future and eternal. Let us desire the spirit of wise, and holy, and serious consideration—that consideration may lead to conviction—that conviction may lead to prayer—that prayer may lead us to cry for mercy, that we may be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ our Saviour, and have peace in his blood.

*First, THE EVENT THAT IS TO BE CONTEMPLATED.*

It is nothing less than what is here emphatically spoken of as our "latter end"—literally, our *last end*. There is an allusion here then to other ends and periods rather than to the period that is final; and we are open to an experience of those periods in life, and to those circumstances connected with life, which may thus be denominated ends or periods designated and set apart, and which are marked for ever in your recollection by particular associations either of happiness or of sorrow.

But, whatever may be said of these revolving periods in our life and our experience, they do not point us immediately to the latter end, and it is eminently the latter end, that end which closes all change, which winds up the entire occupations, and business, and sensibilities of this life, which especially demands our attention.

We may speak of an end as it belongs to that time of which our present life is made up. For instance there are several periods of time which mark our years, and which in themselves have a completeness, and come to an end. The *day* opens upon us in brightness, we pass quickly through its hours, we are employed in a variety of engagements, we come shortly to its close, and there is an end of that day for ever. The *year*, that long period of life, is complete in its time. It also opens upon us smiling in the bounties of Providence; it is characterized by great changes; it introduces us into different scenes; it exposes us to manifold trials; it is sure to bring with it immense toil: but the year, like the day, after passing over us, closes upon us, and there is an end of the year for ever.

Sometimes we may speak in this way of the circumstances of life, which are united together, which form a part of a whole, and the whole itself comprehends a period, and there is an end, a termination, to all worldly enjoyments. You are conscious, perhaps, of some such periods marking your own life. You have looked forward possibly to some event as associated with the deepest trial, you have trembled in expectation of its coming, you have connected with it a variety of circumstances which more or less would impart pungency to your grief—it has nevertheless come, days have brought it, years have brought it, the bereavement, the affliction, the sorrow—of whatever description—has happened to you, and the whole dispensation associated with the period has come to an end, and it is now marked in your memory by a pungency and point which you will carry with you to the day of death. So there may be a completeness, and, therefore, an end, in connexion with the gladsome circumstances of our being. You are young, possibly, and you are looking forward to larger enjoyments, you are anxious that all subordinate joys should contribute to one enjoyment, you are directing all your wishes, all your hopes, all your industry, all your diligence, to this consummation; and you feel, that if the consummation should be realized as you desire, that then your happiness, for this life at least, will be complete. Possibly it has been allowed by Providence that this very event should transpire, that this very end should be realized, that this chain of circumstances should be complete, and that your own expectations should be accomplished, and there has been, in reference to this association, an appointed period.

It has frequently been applied to the *stages* of human life. Our life is made up of different stages, and these stages come in succession to their appointed end. We enter, for instance, into life, in the capacity of *infants*, and there is a period to be passed through which is denominated *our time*. This is very much a period of weakness, and sometimes of sorrow; but it is also especially a period of

joys peculiar to the time of infancy and childhood. But the infant passes onward in his day, the period of childhood closes, he that was a child puts away childish things, he that was indulging all the delights and pleasures of this early period of life, learns to discard them, and to look upward to something more interesting, something more inviting, something more valuable. This is the end of that period of his being.

There is also a period of *youth*. The child becomes a youth; he is placed under tutors and discipline; he passes through a painful course of education; he is to be instructed and prepared for usefulness and consistency in future life. He at first does not apprehend the design of those who kindly appoint him to this course of discipline, and he is unprepared to submit himself to the yoke of such education. But quickly this period of trial and probation also passes away, and possibly the youth rises up into the man, puts off the things of bondage, enters on the wide field of life, commits himself to all its responsibilities and cares, and deems himself happy in this enlarged period of his liberty. There is an end to youth, and to all the fears and discipline of youth.

The *man*, entering on life, bears the heat and burden of the day, connects himself in social relations, trains up a family, discharges the duties of a good citizen, and looks for the appropriate reward of his industry, fidelity, and care. But, soon the period of manhood passes also away: there is an end of him; the strength of his years fails; the energies that he once put forth he can put forth no longer; before he thought, there is here and there a gray hair appearing, but, before he at all expected it, advanced age comes and reminds him of his indisposition, and his exposure to his certain latter end.

All these periods then contribute to what is here considered the latter end, and do undoubtedly lead to it. Our last end is that period which admits of no succession in time; which separates us at once and for ever from earth; which places us on a bed of sickness which is

mortal: which infixes into our nature the sting of the last enemy; which reduces our body to the corruption of the grave; which dismisses our spirit to an invisible state, and which leaves us, and the place which knows us in our present state, as though we had never been there. This is our latter end. There is a period when man leaves the present state, and leaves it for ever! There is a period when he gives up the ghost, the spirit, and his body descends to corruption. There is a period when he has done with enjoyments, when he has done with care, and when every thing dear to him is as nothing. This is his last end. No other changes shall happen to him on earth. No more shall he be visible among the children of men. No more shall he be occupied with business, encumbered with its cares, entangled by its temptations, insnared by its enjoyments: it is all gone and past, and gone and past *for ever!*

The last end of man, therefore, is that period which closes all hope, all society, and all connexion with the present state. In this, man stands distinct and alone. "There is hope," says the patriarch, "of a tree, if it be cut down that it will sprout again:" there is hope under the various circumstances of the severest affliction and trial that light will come, and joy return, and peace will visit the breast; but there is no hope of the return of man to this low, and corrupt, and carnal state, when once he has been delivered from the body, and passed into the unseen world.

We are to consider, therefore, the event as here described, to be the event of our death; and it is this event which

*Secondly, IS TO BE BROUGHT UNDER OUR CONSIDERATION—our serious, our repeated, our prayerful consideration. "O that they would consider their latter end!"*

This is to be considered; and the very command to consider it indicates to us the bright and glorious doctrine of our immortality. If man had on earth a last end, and if that end were complete in relation to an invisible state, as it is complete in relation to an earthly and seen state, then there would be no propriety in urging him to consideration: on the con-

trary, it would be his wisdom not to consider; it would be his wisdom not to anticipate; it would be his wisdom and his joy, so far as such a creature could have joy, not to look forward to that period when he should cease to be, and when he should pass into a state of annihilation. On the principle of infidelity it is well not to consider, not to look forward, for this would spoil his enjoyment here—this would fix his attention, and the unwelcome subject of his annihilation would imbitter all his present pursuits, his present indulgencies, and his present expectations. But when we are exhorted here, and when, as the very object of God's word, we are exhorted to consider the future, we have in that very exhortation the implied announcement of a blessed immortality. Man lives!—man lives beyond the grave!—man lives beyond the state of earthly things!—man lives for ever!—man must live for ever! Man may cast away his inheritance, and lose his joy; but he cannot destroy his being, or annihilate his existence; and hence the propriety of consideration, hence the importance of reflection, hence the suitableness of asking what shall be my portion in the invisible and unknown state,—what my destiny there; and to consider that whatever happens to him here, is only introductory to blessedness hereafter.

There is, then, in this very statement, a recognition of the doctrine of immortality. Infidelity is confounded: life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel: man has his expectations and his thoughts carried on to futurity, and fixed on an invisible state of things: man is taught herein to consider this earth not his home—to consider this state not his rest; but the heavenly state as his home, and the heavenly inheritance as his portion for ever. It is to be, therefore, matter of deep consideration; "O that they would consider their latter end!" that they would consider how soon the last end will come; that they would consider what is the consequence of its arrival; that they would consider that beyond this state they must live for ever; that in the future state they must be for ever blessed

as the angels of heaven, or for ever accursed as the reprobate spirits cast down from God! O, that they would consider these things!

We are to consider that this change *must happen to us all*. It is to enter into our serious reflection, and to be admitted as a proposition of immutable truth, that we must thus pass through our latter end. You are not to speculate on changes happening to others: you are not to dream of death as an event at a distance, as an event that happens with certainty to those about you, while it is not to be realized by yourselves. Consider, I beseech you, seriously, and consider devoutly, that this event, the arrival of your latter end, must be realized *by yourselves!* You must die: you must pass out of this present world: the place which knows you must soon know you no more for ever: the present relations you have here must soon be broken up for ever; and all the hope, and all the joy, which you experience or dream of in the present life, will soon be to you as though it had never been! O, yes, you must be stretched on a hopeless bed of affliction; you must fall under the power of the last adversary, the king of terrors; you must know what it is to contend with him, your weakness against his strength; you must know what it is for the spirit to be disembodied, and to pass into eternity, and to pass upward to the God who gave it.

Consider, not only that this *must* happen, but that *it may happen at any time*. We have referred you to the various periods of which life is composed; we have shown that these periods are terminating in our last end, that end which leaves us without change and fixes our state for ever. But you are not, therefore, to suppose that all these changes and revolutions in life must happen before your latter end shall come. It is possible that this last end may arrive to you before those other periods of change shall be known. It is possible that it may happen at any time, and therefore happen *now!* It may happen to you in *manhood*, bearing all the burdens and duties of life. It may happen you in *youth*. Alas! what numbers fall in that

interesting period of life to rise no more! It may happen to you in *childhood*, even while your tender thoughts are not yet tremblingly alive to God's presence. This last end may take the place of all other ends, may close upon you before you advance through the several changes. Death waits not for confirmed age and trembling years to close its triumphs, but smites when and where he will. You are to consider, therefore, that this change may happen to you at any time; that though you are now young and in health, the event may be near at hand; that though you are full of observation and business, and the designs of the present life, death may snatch you away! Under all circumstances it becomes needful for you to inquire for a Saviour, and that a mighty one; and to know for yourselves him who hath life and immortality to bestow.

We are to consider our latter end. We are so to consider it as to ascertain *whether we are prepared to meet it*. Consider, since you must die, and since you may die at any period, and may, therefore, be called upon to die before the dying year shall itself expire, are you prepared for so great, so final a change? Are you ready? Are you ready on the one hand to renounce the things of the present life? why then do you idolize them so? You have all your hopes and thoughts fixed upon them; you, who have as yet so many schemes unripened, and are so unprepared to close your present state—can you be prepared for your latter end? Can you be prepared to die—you who never thought of dying? Can you be prepared to die—you who are calculating with certainty on many years to come? Can you be prepared to renounce this life, and to renounce the world, attached as you are to it implicitly in all its pursuits, in all its gratifications, and in all its associations? Then consider, I beseech you, not only whether you are prepared on the one hand to renounce the things of this life, but whether, on the other hand, you are prepared for those events which must immediately follow. Scripture teaches us that two great events must immediately follow death:—we

must meet God, and we must stand in judgment. Consider and ask, and ask with the deepest attention, whether you are prepared for such a change? Are you prepared to meet God, to look him in the face, to stand before his presence to answer for the deeds done in the body, to give an account of your occupations and engagements here, to have your whole heart as well as your lives no longer a mystery, but completely exposed to yourselves and to others? Are you prepared for this? A sinful creature, are you prepared to meet unsullied purity? A weak creature, are you prepared to stand before Almighty power? An unhappy creature, are you prepared to meet the divine forgiveness and pardon? A miserable and dying creature, are you prepared to challenge at the hand of God, when you shall see him, the blessing of life and immortality through his beloved Son? Then consider, that when you are thus brought to your latter end, immediately you pass into judgment. The judgment is set, the Judge is on the throne, the books are opened, the whole of your proceedings are recorded, all your motives to action are there brought to recollection, there inserted in undying characters! But, brethren, are you prepared for such a judgment? Consider, and prayerfully inquire whether you are prepared for such a judgment? Can you stand in the judgment? Can you plead with God? Can you enter the judgment so holy, so impartial, yet so extreme? Can you answer for one of a thousand? Can you claim impunity before God? Have you a conscience which can stand before his eye and find acceptance there? Have you any ground for confidence which you dare plead there, as you venture now to plead to your conscience? Consider, I beseech you, as a dying creature—consider it as you must go to the judgment—consider it as you must meet God, consider whether you are prepared to meet him as your God and your Saviour.

We are to consider our latter end. We are not only to consider whether we are prepared for the great change, but *we are carefully and deeply to ponder and consider the consequences of being unprepared*

to meet him. The mind of the *Christian* should frequently revert to this subject, to promote his gratitude, his faith and his hope; and the mind of the *impenitent* should constantly be fixed on this subject, as by the blessing of God it may lead to his conviction, to his conversion, and to his final salvation. Consider if you meet your latter end, and if you are not prepared to meet it, what are the fearful consequences of that state? Have you ever considered it? Have you ever considered it *alone* in solitude, in prayer, and with the light of the Spirit before you beaming full upon you? To enter into your latter end, and pass into futurity unprepared to meet God in judgment, is to fall into the hands of his wrath; is to fall beneath the sentence of his law; is to fall to rise no more; is to become the subject of indwelling, hopeless, and eternal despair; is to have the condemnation of God upon you, the condemnation of your own conscience upon you, the condemnation of all your privileges and lost opportunities upon you—the condemnation of all that is wise and all that is holy in the entire universe of God! Have you considered this? Have you considered this well? Have you considered what it is to contend hopeless without a friend; to stand in the judgment; to fall away from the judgment self-condemned and self-accused, and not waiting for the sentence of legal condemnation? Have you considered what it is to lose the soul, and lose the soul for ever, though here you should have gained the world? Have you considered what it is to give an account in the judgment of every action, of every thought, of every feeling, as well as of every sin that has estranged you from God, and made him your adversary? Have you considered that the aggravation of all this we will be self-accusation? You will have no blame to refer to God—no blame to refer to others—but you will bring down all the accusation upon yourselves. “Yes,” you will say, “I am justly lost; I justly perish; I refused instruction; I despised reproof: I had line upon line, promise upon promise, and mercy upon mercy, but I turned a deaf ear, and exercised a per-

verse and stubborn mind, and refused to seek the things that related to my everlasting peace.” Consider, I beseech you, frequently and deeply, the consequences of that latter end for which you are unprepared.

Then consider *the method by which alone we can be prepared to meet this last end*. Happily we are blessed with a revelation from God; happily, too, that revelation contains a grand scheme of redeeming mercy; and happily, too, this is a sovereign remedy, whilst all others are excluded from our confidence and our hope. The method therefore, by which we can expect to meet God in peace, is the method he has himself devised—devised by his infinite wisdom, accomplished by power also infinite, furnishing to us a proof of love also infinite; and love which scrupled not to send his own Son into the world, that we might have life and salvation through him. Consider that there is life and reconciliation in Christ Jesus. Consider that you may live in peace, and be at peace, and die in safety, through him. Consider that your hope and security rest not in your own method of happiness, but in accepting God’s method, in bowing to God’s precepts, and in believing in God’s dear Son—here is life from the dead; here is the gate of heaven which is closed against the sinner, thrown wide open for your admission; the gates of hell, which were yawning to receive you, are shut for ever against you.

The method of our salvation, therefore, is a method adequate to all our necessities; to our deep guilt, to our exposure to punishment—to just and everlasting punishment. It runs as large as our crimes; it rises above all our iniquities; it blots out all our offences, and turns our mortality and death into the strong assurance of immortality and eternal life. Brethren, we are to know, then, that in the fulness of the gospel there is hope; that by this divine Saviour there is life; and that by receiving God’s method of mercy and reconciliation we may be at peace with him—in Scripture language, “at one” with him; may venture to look forward to meeting God in judgment;

and may be sure that we have a sufficient plea in making a believing mention of the righteousness and name of his Son.

While you consider that this is the great method of safety and peace, consider *whether you have accepted it*. Consider that you are a sinful creature; that you are liable to death by reason of sin; that if you remain in a state of impenitence and unbelief you will necessarily be involved in that guilt, and involved in it for ever! These are all serious and awful truths. But, it is a delightful truth, that if you have heartily received the Lord Jesus, truly and gratefully accepted the everlasting gospel, and have believed in the promises of God to your salvation, you shall not see death; the wrath of God which was upon you shall be removed, and life, justification, and happiness shall be yours. Consider, then, have you received this principle of life? Is this salvation, practically and experimentally, all you desire? Do you adoringly admire the provision of God's wisdom for yourself? Do you gratefully receive Jesus Christ in truth as your Prophet, Priest, and King? Have you entirely surrendered yourself to his keeping; and are you looking with confidence even upon the judgment, while you say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that though my flesh shall suffer destruction, and see mortality, I shall live, and shall stand with him, and be justified in him in that great day!" And consider, have you renounced every thing for Christ's sake? Are you made a justified man? Have you this evidence of being delivered from sin—that sin has broken your heart—that sin has humbled you in contrition before God—that you are looking away from yourself to him who alone is a sufficient Saviour? Are you daily committing yourself to his blessing?

The whole object of the discourse is to fix upon our minds *the importance of giving consideration to this subject*. It is not merely necessary that the subject should be entertained during a passing discourse; it is not merely necessary that the mind should be awakened and affected; but it is necessary that the con-

sideration of it should become so much a habit, should be so continually entertained and cherished by us, as that it should have the nature and power of *principle* within us. Consider habitually, consider prayerfully, these manifestations of the grace of God. The Christian man will become a considerate man: the real penitent will also become a considerate man. The more we are animated by the hopes and joys of eternity, the more shall we be disposed to cherish consideration, as the best companion of earth, and the best introduction to light and joy.

Consider, therefore, your latter end: consider it that you may be wise; consider it in all your occupations, pursuits, and engagements. In your richest joy, let this principal consideration say to you, "Thou must die!" In that great school let the principal consideration say to you, "Thou wilt pass away as an hour, and thou must enter into rest!" Let it impart to the *Christian* all its *hope*; let it convey to the *sinner* all its *terror*! The terror shall, by God's blessing, be salutary; and the hope shall retain the faster hold, until hope is confirmed in joy.

But not only does our subject commend consideration, but *the very circumstances in which we are placed invite us to it*. One other year is dying away from us; another and a new year will open upon us, if our frail life shall be spared; and we are placed in circumstances which call for prayerful and deep consideration. Consider how time is flying away! Consider how certainly you must die! Consider how uncertain is the time when you shall be called to die! Consider that after death there is the judgment! Consider that it is only as you are found in Christ, receiving him, and walking in him, that you can hope for pardon, justification, and peace hereafter. Consider these things. Let the Christian consider this with believing enjoyment. Christian, the days are passing quickly over you, but the days which bring you nearer to your latter end, are bringing you nearer to an expected end, an end which shall be joyous. Your prayers would want an answer, your desires would want accomplishment, and your hopes would want

consummation, if you were not to die— if you were not to experience, after all your changes, a latter end which admits of no subsequent change. Every change to you shall be the advance of your happiness, your introduction to nearer fellowship with God; and your last change shall be a complete introduction to the favour and blessedness of God's eternal Son. Carry hope with you to the end; let it sustain you in the darkest night of adversity; let it be your companion and joy in the midst of conflict and mortality; and let it bear you up, and bear you onward, as the hope of salvation, to the feet of Christ, to the very gates of heaven, and to the final judgment.

O, that we were *all* wise, thus to consider our latter end; but, alas, brethren, how many of us are unwise! how many of us do not consider! how many of us fear to entertain consideration! Put that fear away. You are conscious of refusing to think on this subject: you entertain every worldly arrangement in order to shut eternity and death out of consideration. O, what a death you will die if you live in this state! It is not by refusing to think of death that you can overcome it and put it away; if you could, then it might be wise not to consider. It is not by refusing to consider of judgment, to anticipate how you shall stand there, and with what righteousness you shall be expelled from heaven, that you can avoid it; otherwise it might be wise and well so to refuse. Think, or not think, time is flying! Think, or not think, death is coming! Willing or unwilling, you must die, and your latter end must come, and you must stand in judgment! I put it to your conscience—is it rational, is it wise, is it consistent, to be appointed to such a destiny, and never to consider?

O, that you were wise to consider your latter end! O, that by any persuasion I could win you to consider—and win you to consider with that evangelical inquiry and prayerful heart that it demands from you! All things are asking you to con-

sider. Believing friends are silently but eloquently entreating: parents are solemnly offering prayer to God, that by his gracious influence he would dispose you to consideration. The dying year, as it passes away, solemnly says to your conscience, "O, that you would consider your latter end!" And, in the words of our text, the voice of the living God himself is heard, and heard with tenderness, saying to you, "O, that they would consider their latter end!" It is not merely I that speak to you; it is not merely the affectionate parent that addresses you; it is not merely a waning and expiring year that calls upon you, and demands your attention,—it is the voice of God your Maker—God your Judge—God, who can kill, and who can make alive. You are in his hands; you are *all* in his hands; I leave you there, and I pray that in his hands you may be constrained at last to tremble for your sins. Turn to him and live, and receive the offers of his love by his own loving Son, that you may enjoy that love above.

May he sanctify his word! Amen.

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#### EPHESUS.

A MORE thorough change can scarcely be conceived than that which has actually occurred at Ephesus. Once the seat of active commerce, the very sea has shrunk from its solitary shores; its streets, once populous with the devotees of Diana, are now ploughed over by the Ottoman serf, or browsed by the sheep of the peasant. It was early the stronghold of Christianity, and stands at the head of the apostolic churches of Asia. It was there that, as St. Paul says, "the word of God grew mightily and prevailed." Not a single Christian now dwells within it! Its mouldering arches, and dilapidated walls, merely whisper the tale of its glory; and it requires the acumen of the geographer, and the active scrutiny of the exploring traveller, to form a probable conjecture as to the very site of the "first wonder of the world."—*Letters from the Ægean.*

## SERMON XXXVI.

THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

BY THE REV. THOMAS J. JUDKIN.

*"To-day is a Sabbath unto the Lord."*—Exod. xvi. 25.

MAN is naturally averse from all restraint; he is a stiff-necked creature, and will not easily bow to the yoke. It is little matter, however holy the rule, or wise the precept, or salutary the discipline; however great or venerable the authority, or strong the testimonies of a happy experience, all are resisted by the strength of an opposing pride. His secret and dearly cherished delight is to stand uncontrolled in his choice, and to remain unsubmitive to any will but his own. He shapes a path for himself; he exults, like the untamed beast, in the lawlessness of an evil course; he shuts out the very light itself, that he may be free in darkness; he loveth darkness better than light. Let even Him, who wrought mighty miracles; let Christ exhort, and he refuseth to obey; let the appalling voice go forth which shook Sinai with its thunders; let Jehovah speak, and still his posture is defiance: he makes light of the commands of the living God; he glories in rebellion. What caused Satan's fall from a world of bliss; what led him to prefer a region of tempest and fire? Self; that he might be his own master. What cost Adam an expulsion from the garden of paradise—his driving out by an angel into the wilderness? The answer is the same,—Self; that he might be his own master. What is now plunging so widely the soul of the sinner into the punishment of God's violated law? The answer is the same,—Self; that he might be his own master. How is it that thousands of our fellows are, at the time I am now speak-

ing, making profanation of this sacred day; resisting the ordinances of the Lord; doing their own way; finding their own pleasures; speaking their own words; ceasing to make the Sabbath a spiritual delight, the holy of the Lord, and honourable? The answer is one and the same,—Self; that they might be their own masters. Pride is the awfully influential principle which, as it first cast from God, keeps from God; which, as it first drove from paradise, prevents a return to paradise; which, as it first went to depeople heaven, now goes to the thinning of the church of Christ, and the peopling of hell.

Christians, may you ever pray against pride; may you earnestly beseech the Holy Spirit that he will graft in your hearts true humility; and that so sinking the confident man, the boastful and vain reasoner, into the little child, into the meek disciple, you may learn Christ; you may reverence Christ's authority as one that teacheth; you may obey his words as the wisdom, and the truth, and the love of God, to his own glory and your everlasting good; to which I add a sincere and heartfelt Amen, for Jesus' sake.

*"To-day is a Sabbath unto the Lord."* On this text I would comprehend what I have to say, in the raising and the answering three questions.

*First*, How is TO-DAY TO BE KEPT AS A SABBATH UNTO THE LORD? *Secondly*, WHY IS TO-DAY TO BE KEPT AS A SABBATH UNTO THE LORD? *Thirdly*, WHERE

IS TO-DAY NOT KEPT AS A SABBATH UNTO THE LORD? And may the Lord of the Sabbath direct and bless for Christ's sake.

The Sabbath is a day of consecration, a setting apart to the Lord. It was with the Lord a day of profound rest, after the labours of the creation; a time, I should say, of spiritual enjoyment and complacency on a review of all he had wrought for man by the wonderful contrivances of his own infinite wisdom; by the outstretching of his own infinite, creating, and sustaining power; by the expansiveness of his own free, sovereign, and enriching love. It was a day on which, as the source of all things, he looked, as it were, along his own rays, his own emanations, and he delighted to behold that all was good. It is a day that should be full of God, full of divine contemplations; it is a day to be rendered to him, as the offering of the gold seven times purified; it is a day of the whole dedication of the body and soul to the Lord, as not our own, but as his. The divine command of Moses was distinguished from the rest of the rules of the decalogue by a more solemn form and emphasis, "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath-day." By Jeremiah: "Hallow ye the Sabbath-day, as I commanded your fathers." By Ezekiel: "Hallow my Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know I am the Lord your God."

To keep this day of the Lord is, then, to hallow it. And how are you to do so? I will now, in the way of rule, make answer, premising, that your spiritual exercises will be personal and particular; that they will be of the closet as well as of the temple. And,

First, *The day will be begun, continued, and ended in self-examination.*

The Sabbath presents, as it were, a standing place, a breathing place for this holy and too much neglected duty. In the *morning*, as you rise from your beds, inquire into the progress of your souls, in sanctification and in meetness for heaven. Weigh leisurely and solemnly the matter in the sight of God, as to your growth in grace, and in the knowledge of your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—as to severer

mortifications of self; as to your wider separation from the vain customs of an evil world; as to a more complete uprooting, from the deep places of your hearts, your favourite and cherished sins; as to a more close and frequent communion with God in the spirit of prayer; as to lowlier submission to the teachings of the great Guide into all truth; as to the evidence of a holier fear, of a livelier faith, of a more expansive benevolence to the brethren in Christ; as to the increase of the love of God within you, since the last Sabbath.

*Through the day also, let the self-communing voice press the inquiry.* If, amidst the exercises of the church, your hearts, as well as words, are Godward; if, while you confess your sin, you think of your sin, you keep it before you; if, while you bewail your manifold infirmities, you feel the weight of your infirmities; if, while you breathe requests for pardon, you are deeply sensible that you stand in need of pardon; if, while you pray for strength to overcome your spiritual enemies, you are conscious of your exposure to your spiritual enemies; if, while you make your thanksgiving to almighty God for his mercies, and, above all, for his inestimable love, in the redemption of the world, by our Lord Jesus Christ, you recall his mercies, and do thus acknowledge the grace of a God in Christ.

At the *close* of the day, too, you will ask of your souls what enlightening and sanctifying effects have been produced upon you by the services of the spiritual house; by the prayers you have prayed; by the great truths you have heard to the exaltation of Christ as your only Redeemer, and to the abasement of the sinner? And whether you have added through the day to faith and virtue, by an exhibition of a pure and consistent example, so that no violence has been done to your conduct at the house of God by your conduct at home; nothing occurred to mar the image of the profession in the outward conversation; nothing that might, to your servants, or to your children, create a suspicion, or darken with a doubt your sincerity and truth.

Secondly, *The day should be begun,*

*continued, and ended in prayer.* Prayer at your own bedside, and prayer at your family altar, that upon you and yours God would vouchsafe the enlightening, the convincing, the sanctifying influence of his Holy Spirit; that, in a frame of devout gladness and of holy desire, and of unfeigned humility and meekness, you may enter into our religious house; that the minister of Christ appointed to watch over you might preach to the understanding and to the conscience, with demonstration and with power; that, with all simplicity, and faithfulness, and fearlessness, he deliver the gospel message as it came to him from the lips of Christ; as it came from Christ to a fallen, and ruined, and lost world; that, under God, you may thus add daily to the church such as shall be saved.

Again, *through* the day, in the two services—I say the two services of the day—the litanies and the collects will present their full matter, their rich material, towards making your requests known unto God, in all that may meet your spiritual as well as your bodily wants, by your relationship to him as well as to others.

And then, at *night*, when the gates of the sanctuary are closed, you will bow your knees before the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, that he may have made your hearts prepared ground for the bringing forth of the sown word sixty and a hundredfold; that Christ and his doctrine may abide in you richly, and with all knowledge; that the Sabbath may shed its chastising and sweet influences through the actions of the coming week; that, indeed, men may take knowledge that you have been with Jesus; that your hearts are burning, as it were, with some new talk with him upon the way; that your faces are zealously set Zion-ward; that you have had a closer walk with God, and a more calm and a more happy frame; that you are ripening, shall I say, for heaven itself.

Thirdly, *As a general direction, the day will be begun, will be continued, and will be ended in praise.*

*Begun*—praise to the mercies of the Lord, that, though in death's orb, you

have yet another opportunity to receive the news from heaven, the glad tidings of great joy; to hear what the Lord God will speak, for he will speak peace to his people and to his saints. Praise—that you can enter this holy place without fear of the violence of persecuting men; that you may worship in the truth, calmly and securely. Praise—that you have a new occasion for meeting the gracious smiles of Him who cometh to be amidst and to bless the two and three that are gathered together in his name.

*Continued*—praise through the day that you do see the marvellous light amidst the great darkness; that, in your doubts, your ignorances, and sorrows, you have unveiled to your eyes the source of all truth and all consolation; that you have brought near to you, amidst the severities of the law, the mercies of the gospel; amidst the terrors of the judgment, the promises of pardon; amidst the despairing conflicts with Satan, the offers of reconciliation and of peace; that still to the bitten by the fiery flying serpent, there stands out the cross, to which whosoever looketh shall live and be whole; that still there is opened to you the freedom of access to a Father of reconciliation, through the infinite merits of Jesus Christ.

*Ended*—there will be praise on the Christian's lips, as the Sabbath declines, that God has been very gracious to him at the voice of his cry; that he has led him once more into the garden of his Zion, into his fruitful vineyard; that he has made for him a feast of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees, well refined; that he has nourished him with the bread of life, and permitted him to draw water from the wells of salvation, springing up unto everlasting life. But,

*Secondly, WHY ARE WE TO KEEP TODAY AS A SABBATH TO THE LORD?*

Why? This is not a vain, not an unimportant question. There are thousands of nominal Christians who can give but a very idle and very unsatisfactory answer; who have no better than this, because it is the custom of the country; because it is the habit of early youth; because it is the example of the family; because it is the badge of respectability; because it is

an exaction that is due to decency; because it is the tasked duty of the Christian name; because it is incumbent on a man who should support the political rights of the state: these are the common replies; that is to say, if the man speak out, these would be the common replies. But we have more solid grounds to build on than these; and if it be expected—and it ought to be expected—that we be always ready to give an answer to every man who asketh us the reason for the hope that is in us, it surely cannot be less so for our practice. Why? Because, if it be true, as true it is, that religion is a rational service, and if it be necessary and expedient that a certain time should be appointed for its general rendering; and that the choice of this time cannot reside better than in the will of Him whom the act most immediately affects; and if, moreover, the Object himself of our worship *has* required the observance of a particular day, and the Lord God hath commanded that we keep holy the Sabbath day, I say it follows, as a consequence, that we are bound to do so.

Again, that we should keep this day holy to the Lord would appear obligatory, because it was a day on which the apostles and the early Christians assembled themselves together. The passage in the Acts, independently of others, confirms this, where we read, "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread." Because also a distinguishing title hath been given to it, as denoting its institution by Christ. St. John telleth us, in the Revelations, "that he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." Because, too, that down from the apostolical age, its observance has been the uniform practice of the church; that, however great the divisions, and violent the disputes of that church on other questions, this has ever remained undoubted and undisturbed. Because it is very natural and very consistent that the greatest of all events that could affect the interests of a Christian world; that could fill with the sublimest of its joys; that could awaken the language of its proudest triumphs, should have its own day of commemoration; and that He who as-

cended up on high, leading captivity captive, bearing on his brow the crown of three victories over sin, over death, and over hell; who thus brought life and immortality to light; who thus consummated his great work for which he travailed through the agonies of the body, and through the agonies of the soul, being delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification; that he should thus have a day dedicated to the honour of his name, to the expression of our holy gratitude for his marvellous love; to the keeping of his ordinances; to the assembling together of his people; and for the more immediate propagation of his cause, and to the spreading of his glories.

Another reason obtains in the fact, that it was a day on which the great promise was fulfilled of the diffusion of the Holy Ghost, when there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and filled the house (see Acts ii. 2) where the disciples were sitting, so that they received all fulness of consolation—for he was promised to become their Comforter—all fulness of consolation to sustain and gladden their hearts on their toilsome and their persecuted way; and had at once opened to their view the whole compass of the manifold languages by which they were to disseminate the intelligence of the glorious gospel of Christ to the children of men, by which they were to go forth to emancipate in foreign lands, in idolatrous lands, from the grievous bondage of Satan to the liberty of the sons of God. It was upon the first creation of a material universe that the old Sabbath was ordained, and it was upon the second creation of a spiritual universe, I may say, that we are thus furnished with an additional argument for keeping the new. The blind man could never forget the day on which he received sight; the lame man could never forget the day on which he walked; the leper could never forget the day on which he was cleansed; the captive could never forget the day when his chains and his fetters were knocked off; no more can we of the visible outshedding of that power from on high, of that Spirit of our God, by which the dead in trespasses and sins

are quickened; by which the dry bones lying at the mouth of the sepulchre became instinct with breath, were clothed again with flesh, started into being, and lived.

Because, again, the Lord God has distinguished this day by a more peculiar manifestation of his divine grace. Now, think for a moment of that marvellous energy which went forth on this day to the conversion of three thousand souls, at the heart-searching sermon of that minister of God, St. Peter. And think for a moment, of that glorious revelation of the heavenly places; of the residence of the mighty angels; of their holy engagements; of the very anthems which they are now singing; of their blessedness; of the great white throne, and of Him who sitteth thereon; and of the glorified body of Christ in the semblance of the Lamb; and of the very atmosphere of heaven, where there is no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof: think, I say, of the revelation to St. John of these things, and greater things than these, as made on *this* day to the inspiration of tens of thousands, with comfort and with joy—with bright hopes and happy assurances—and say, if we have not most abundant reason for keeping this day as a Sabbath, a solemn Sabbath to the Lord.

But I need not have gone beyond the walls of this church; I need not have travelled out of the round of your own personal experience, in confirmation of the fact, that the Lord honoureth this day above other days. When were you first stricken with a conviction of sin; was it not on the Lord's day? When in the depths of your distress, in your gloomy doubts and fears, were you directed to a Saviour? When were you relieved from the terrors of the law by the grace of the gospel? When was the first bursting asunder of the chains, so that you walked in liberty? When was the oil and the wine of the good Samaritan poured into your wounds? Was it not on the Lord's day? When did the promises of the gospel open before you in all their sweetness and

power? Was it not at the hand of some Christian minister upon the Lord's day? When was your communion with God the most abstracted from the world, at its greatest and highest? Was it not on the Lord's day? When was it that your blessed Redeemer revealed himself most to you, as not unto the world, and the Holy Ghost seemed to shadow you with his larger influences? Was it not, I will ask you, when you drew near the table, and partook, in faith, and in penitence, and in prayer, of the broken bread, and of the sacred wine, in remembrance of the death and of the passion of Christ on the Lord's day. Yes, I am sure that many here, (O, would to God there were many more!) I am sure that many here will confess that they have been most elevated in religious exercises; that they have enjoyed their richest of consolations; that they have been less of the earth, earthy, and more of heaven, heavenly, upon the Lord's day. I say that the testimony, the witness, is in your own hearts, as to the peculiar manifestation of the grace of God upon this day. I have thus very feebly touched on some of the more prominent reasons for keeping this day as a Sabbath to the Lord; I must leave it to your own meditations to supply others.

Thirdly, and very briefly, *Where is this day not kept as a Sabbath unto the Lord?* It is not kept as a Sabbath to the Lord where it is made a day of bodily labour; where the shop is opened; where the ledger is consulted; where the principle of money-getting is employing any of its means for the increase of our worldly state, or where even the sustenance of the body is to be toiled for in those hours which are emphatically the Lord's. There is a striking instance of the strictness of Jewish sabbatical observance in the words about my text, where you will see upon the gathering of a small round thing (I quote from Scripture) which lay as small as the hoar-frost upon the ground—the bread which the Lord had given Israel to eat—when they swerved from the directions of Moses, and dressed it on the Sabbath, the nutriment was turned, as it were, into poison, bred worms, and

stank; whereas, when they dressed it on the sixth day, it remained over the Sabbath fresh and good. So jealous was the Lord of the devotion of the Sabbath-day *then*; and can he be less so *now*? The question addresses your reason.

Again, this day is not kept as a Sabbath unto the Lord, where you pursue your own notions of ease and of pleasure, instead of yielding yourselves unreservedly to God's service; where the doors of his temple are left standing open, and you are wanderers in the fields, or indulging yourselves, perhaps, in the latter part of the day, during the afternoon service, indulging yourselves in the chair of slothful ease at home, or extending unnecessarily, some of you, the pleasures of the table. And you who absent yourselves from our afternoon service, I have often thought, that if, during those sacred hours, your houses were unroofed, or your apartments made of glass, and you could be seen of man, as you are seen of God, what a melancholy picture would be presented of the inconsistency of your conduct with the prayers that you had prayed, and the vows that you had uttered, in the morning service. It is my duty to bring these things home to you; but I must leave them to a more powerful preacher than myself, and that preacher is conscience: how speaks conscience now?

But, turning from you, for a moment, to the nation. I have an awful foreboding of the divine judgments that follow national sins. I remember the conduct of God of old in this matter; and there can be no doubt but that his moral government is upon one and the same law. I know not of any curse upon the land that seems to me so big and so ready to burst, as the curse upon the national neglect of the Sabbath. The poor and the rich are alike involved here. It is to me an awful thing, as a Christian minister, labouring in the vineyard of Christ, it is an awful thing to reflect that, upon this holy day, some forty thousand of newspapers are sending their baleful and their demoralizing principles through the land; and that the vehicles of profit and of pleasure, the stages and the steamboats, are increased within a few years a hundredfold; and

that shops, particularly in the suburbs of London, are opened with a more shameful effrontery than ever; and that the labouring classes in a great degree waste the day in laziness at home, or spend their time, in far greater numbers, at the tavern and the tea-gardens; and that many of the rich devote a part of the day to the returning of calls, to the receiving of visits, and to an unnecessary employment of cattle and engagement of servants, to the frivolities of conversation and the vanities of dress, and to the public promenade, closing the evening with wine and music. And that, neglected by magistrates and rulers, there are meetings held, and places opened for the utterance of the most profane mockeries of the revealed word, of the most awful blasphemies of God and of his Christ; I say, that these things, among many others that might be mentioned, make me pause with fear and with trembling, amid the awful sweep of the retributive justice of God.

But for a moment I would turn to the violations of the Sabbath in this district. These are many, and they are flagrant. We have more newsvenders than ever; and while I know no man from the pulpit, but speak generally, I would ask, Are there not some here present who give, during this day, a far greater attention to the records of politics, and of accident, than they do to their Bibles; who shut their prayer books—who have shut them this morning service—to go home and cut the newspapers, which are now lying wet upon their tables? Again, it has fallen under my notice, the half-closed shops which are so inviting to the young and the thoughtless. In our neighbourhood, and within a quarter of a mile from this church, there has been to-day—and there is every Sunday—there has been a perfect fair held, a thronged fair—all trades being carried on with the utmost impunity; and though we bring the matter before the magistrates, yet, after crossing us with vexatious proceedings, they at last pay the fine, and laugh in the magistrate's face. I say I know this to be a fact, and I have made several humble efforts to remove the evil, but I have hitherto been unable; and I do, therefore, earnestly

call upon some of you to come forward and assist me; and I invite such as are able, to meet me at the commissioners' rooms on Tuesday evening next, that we may devise some plan to check the torrent that is flowing in amongst us. Other parishes have been doing much in this way, and it were a shame in me, as a Christian minister, desiring the spiritual improvement of this neighbourhood, that I should remain idle. I trust, therefore, that this appeal to your assistance will be met, and that you will come forward and make my wishes effectual.

I add no more but an earnest call upon you, that each man betake himself to prayer, for a more unreserved dedication of himself to the general and peculiar duties of *this day*; and that while God of his infinite grace assists him in keeping it as a Sabbath to the Lord, he may use all laudable and Christian means to excite others to its like observances; to the blessing of the community, to the increase of the church of Christ, and to the glory of God.

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THE HUMILIATION OF CHRIST.

WE are told that Christ "emptied himself;" so that, "though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor." But of what did he empty himself? Not of his being, not of his nature, not of his attributes. It must be blasphemous to speak of properties of Godhead as laid aside, or even suspended. But Christ "emptied himself" of the glories and the majesties to which he had claim, and which, as he sat on the throne of the heavens, he possessed in unmeasured abundance. Whatsoever he was, as to nature and essence, whilst appearing amongst the angels in the form of God, that he continued to be still, when, in the form of a servant, he walked the scenes of human habitation. But then the *glories* of the form of God, these for a while he altogether abandoned. If, indeed, he had appeared upon earth as, according to the dignity of his nature, he had right to appear, in the majesty and glory of the Highest, it might be hard to understand what riches had been lost by Divinity. The scene of display would be changed. But the splendour of

display being unshorn and undiminished, the armies of the sky might have congregated round the Mediator, and have given in their full tale of homage and admiration. But, O, it was poverty that the Creator should be moving on a province of his own empire, and yet not be recognised nor confessed by his creatures. It was poverty, that when he walked amongst men, scattering blessings as he trode, the anthem of praise floated not around him, and the air was often burdened with the curse and the blasphemy. It was poverty, that, as he passed to and fro, through tribes whom he had made, and whom he had come down to redeem, scarce a solitary voice called him blessed, scarce a solitary hand was stretched out in friendship, and scarce a solitary roof ever proffered him shelter. And when you contrast this deep and desolate poverty with that exuberant wealth which had been always his own, whilst heaven continued the scene of his manifestations—the wealth of the anthem-peal of ecstasy from a million rich voices, and of the solemn bowing down of sparkling multitudes, and of the glowing homage of immortal hierarchies, whensoever he showed forth his power or his purposes—ye cannot fail to perceive that, in taking upon him flesh, the Eternal Son descended, most literally, from abundance to want; and that, though he continued just as mighty as before—just as infinitely gifted with all the stores and resources of essential Divinity—the transition was so total, from the reaping-in of glory from the whole field of the universe to the receiving, comparatively, nothing of his revenues of honour, that we may assert, without reserve, and without figure, that he who was rich, for our sakes became poor. "In the form of God," he had acted, as it were, visibly, amid the enraptured plaudits of angel and archangel, cherubim and seraphim. But now, in the form of man, he must be withdrawn from the delighted inspections of the occupants of heaven, and act as powerfully, indeed, as before, but mysteriously and invisibly, behind a dark curtain of flesh, and on the dreary platform of a sin-burdened territory. So that the antithesis, "the form

of God," and "found in fashion as a man," marks accurately the change to which the Mediator submitted. And thus whilst, on our former showings, there is no impeachment, in the phrase, of the reality of Christ's humanity, we now extract from the description a clear witness to the divinity of Jesus; and show you that a form of speech which seems at first sight vague and indefinite, was, if not rendered unavoidable, yet readily dictated by the union of natures in the person of the Redeemer.—*Rev. H. Melvill.*

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SINGULAR DREAM.

A GOSPEL minister, of evangelical principles—whose name, from the circumstances that occurred, it will be necessary to conceal—being much fatigued at the conclusion of the afternoon service, retired to his apartment in order to take a little rest. He had not long reclined upon his couch before he fell asleep, and began to dream. He dreamed, that on walking into his garden, he entered a bower that had been erected in it, where he sat down to read and meditate. While thus employed, he thought that he heard some person enter the garden; and, leaving his bower, he immediately hastened towards the spot whence the sound seemed to come, in order to discover who it was that had entered. He had not proceeded far before he discerned a particular friend of his, a gospel minister of considerable talents, who had rendered himself very popular by his zealous and unwearied exertions in the cause of Christ.

On approaching his friend, he was surprised to find his countenance with a

gloom, which it had not been accustomed to bear, and that it strongly indicated a violent agitation of mind, apparently arising from conscious remorse. After the usual salutations had passed, his friend asked the relater the time of the day? To which he replied, "Twenty-five minutes after four." On hearing this, the stranger said, "It is only one hour since I died, and now"—(here his countenance spoke unutterable horrors.) "Why so troubled?" inquired the dreaming minister. "It is not," said he, "because I have not preached the gospel; neither is it because I have not been rendered useful; for I have now many seals to my ministry, that can bear testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus, which they have received from my lips: but it is because I have been accumulating to myself the applause of men, more than the honour which cometh from above; and verily I have my reward." Having uttered these expressions, he hastily disappeared, and was seen no more.

The minister awaking shortly afterwards, with the contents of this dream deeply engraven on his memory, proceeded, overwhelmed with serious reflections, towards his chapel, in order to conduct the evening service. On his way thither, he was accosted by a friend, who inquired whether he had heard the severe loss the church had sustained in the death of that able minister, \* \* \*, and he replied, "No:" but, being much affected at this singular intelligence, he inquired of him the day and time of the day when his departure took place. To this his friend replied, "This afternoon, at twenty-five minutes after three o'clock!"

## SERMON XXXVII.

THE NATURE OF CONVERSION AND THE SOURCES OF DELAY.

BY THE REV. GEORGE B. McDONALD.

*“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest.”—Eccl. ix. 10.*

To my mind there is something unutterably solemn in the words I have just read—“No work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest.” How unlike is the region of the dead to the world in which we live! Every thing around us is in motion: men are busily engaged in planning schemes and executing them. But “in the grave whither thou goest,” naught moves but the worm which riots on the corruption of the body. There all is alike dead: the body lies there in insensibility; the mind, the most exquisitely sensitive, has there no feeling; the soul, most quickly alive to the joys and sorrows of friendship, has there no sympathy with joys or with sorrows. There is no wisdom, no knowledge there: all that distinguishes man from the beast ceases: man, proud man, has there no wisdom, no genius, no talent, no intellect; but is, in the desolation of the matter of his body, like the beasts that perish.

My friends, and why all this? The solution of that question may be revolting to our minds, but it is not the less accurate. Man is a transgressor of the law of God—“Sin has entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” When you gaze upon the lifeless body of a fellow creature, you have the most signal display of what sin can do and has done. Man was the last great work of God—his favourite piece of workmanship, made in his own image, and after

his own likeness. But beloved as he was, no sooner did he transgress the divine law, and thus break in on the symmetry of that holiness which he possessed, than he became offensive to God, and brought down on himself the withering curse—“Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

Let it never be forgotten, that there is something penal in death: it is a part of the punishment which is due to sin. Never speak of death as a something which happens in the mere course of nature. Nature, in her lofty and unbroken laws, moves up yonder in heaven; and there is no grave there:—man goes down to the grave, not a debtor to nature, but to the justice of God. Death is not a debt due to nature: nature abhors the charge. There never was death in heaven, where the laws of God are unbroken. There was originally no death in paradise; and there would have been no sepulchre in this wide weary world in which you and I live, but that sin had entered. It is the hand of an enemy that has been here: sin has done this work; for he put the envenomed dart into the hand of death, and he raised him before us in the sepulchral form of “the king of terrors.” The sentence is pronounced upon all flesh, and ere long it shall be fulfilled on every one of us. The time is not far remote when we shall be followed to the grave as we have followed our friends. And O, it will seem but a moment from that period in which our friends shall take

the last look of our coffin lid, till the time when we shall start up in all the immortality of our being, awakened by the sound of the archangel's trumpet!

The circumstances of my death and my sepulchre are, I confess, very secondary things to my mind. I care not where I am buried, nor how I am put into the grave. I want to know how I am to get out: whether I am to rise and wing my way to the right hand, and wait with joy and gladness of spirit till I am called to give glory to God through the salvation I have obtained in Jesus Christ; or whether by some instinct peculiar to such a raised state of existence, I shall turn away to the left hand, and, amid yon foul spirits just brought in chains from the depths of darkness, wait till I am summoned to give an account of the deeds done in the body; foreboding, by that species of companionship, the dreadful destiny, inalienable and eternal in its nature, which awaits me.

Look at the word of God soberly, and take the word of God for your monitor, and you will find that the great work every man ought to engage in is the salvation of his own soul; compared with which the acquisition of property and the settlement of families are altogether vanity and folly: "For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" And yet, upon this point we are most fearfully slothful. To the present hour, perhaps, we have been reckless of that sloth: but let us now entreat of God, in solemn lifting up of our hearts to him, that his Holy Spirit may show us the value of our souls; and that what shall this night be advanced may be riveted on our minds, that we may indeed do with our might what our hand findeth to do.

Your attention shall, this evening, be directed to two leading ideas. In the *first* place, I SHALL STATE THE NATURE OF CONVERSION TO GOD, AND SHOW THAT IT IS A SUBJECT WHICH DEMANDS OUR INSTANT ATTENTION. *Secondly*, I SHALL EXHIBIT SOME OF THE SOURCES OF YOUR DELAY, AND EXPOSE THEIR FOLLY.

My first position is, To STATE THE NATURE OF CONVERSION TO GOD, AND TO

SHOW WHY IT IS A SUBJECT WHICH DEMANDS OUR INSTANT ATTENTION. It is a truth which cannot too frequently be brought before our minds, and certainly cannot be too deeply impressed on them—that "we have all gone out of the way," that "there is none that doeth good; no, not one." The doctrine of original sin, and the fact of our personal practical depravity, enter elementarily into all correct notions of the Scripture plan of mercy. We deem it utterly unlikely that any man can appreciate the salvation which the gospel makes known to us, and the way in which it was procured, without that man recognising these points: for if I am not an utterly depraved creature, I cannot see the exact necessity of the Christian revelation. If I be not an utterly undone creature, I am not prepared to appreciate that mercy which God has presented in the gift of his dear Son. If my case be not altogether one that cannot be relieved by men or by angels, I can see no necessity for Jesus Christ the Son of God having become incarnate, and suffered and bled and died. But recognise the doctrine of man's entire depravity—that the heart is corrupt, the whole powers depraved, and then the whole scheme of the atonement breaks forth in all its heavenly radiance, and you perceive, indeed, that it is of God to save man.

If you look at the subject, I think you will find it not less true as a matter of fact than of scriptural revelation, that man is depraved. What is the history of by-gone days? Read it, condense it, and give me the analysis. I shall find you will sum it up in few pages; and it will be the detail of empires founded in the lust of power and extended in the lust of conquest. I should see empires enlarged by violence and rapine: I should see dominion extended by every species of cruelty, and at last sinking into insignificance, bowed down by the weight of its luxury and of its crime. And what is the history of modern times? It exhibits, in miniature, a very striking portraiture of olden times, presenting the same workings of malevolent dispositions. The very fact of the establish-

ment of a magistracy in your land, is an evidence of the received opinion of man's depravity. Your code of laws is likewise a proof, and your magistrates being terrors to evil-doers, form strong evidence that man is a fallen creature, or a creature powerfully inclined to depravity.

That we may be properly affected by this statement of the doctrine, we must bring it home to our own hearts; and we shall then find what Scripture declares—that "we have all gone out of the way." Where is the man that can step forward and affirm that he had never said, or done, or proposed aught which had not the highest affirmation of his sober judgment in his after life? I never heard but of one man, and that was the infidel, Rousseau; he looked back on the life he had passed, and solemnly declared, that if he had to live over again, there was nothing he had done which he would not again do, and that there was nothing he would do which he had left undone. We leave such vaunting, hectoring speeches to infidels, and to them alone; for it requires the outrage of all modesty to make such a declaration as that was. You may, indeed, discover some flowers which, in a manner, adorn the ruins of our nature,—but let not those flowers lead you to forget the desolation of the building. Man was created in the image of God: he was once a temple whose symmetry and whose beauty declared its builder and its maker to be God; but now he is in ruins. Here and there you may see a pillar polished "after the similitude of a palace;" here and there is an altar decorated as belonging to a temple of splendid size and ornamental appearance; here and there is a mighty fragment preserved, to give some idea of the magnificence of the building which once existed—of the length and breadth of it; but let not your minds be so fixed on these as to lead you to suppose that man is still as he was when he came out of the hands of his Maker. You may look on some splendid acts of benevolence, and on some deeds of piety which you may have performed; but you must efface seasons in which ebullitions of passions were displayed—in which excitement to evil was yielded to—and

in which the depravity of your heart became rampant and triumphant. Look at it which way you will, you must see that the alteration of that soul, in its character, principles, and desires, should constitute man's great work. You have lived busily and actively to the present time; but, let me tell you, it is to no purpose if you have not regarded the salvation of your soul as the first thing: I mean, to no valuable purpose—to no purpose that would tell after death. If, this night, your soul were to be required of you, you have lived to no purpose indeed. You can show me your title deeds and your parchments; but which of them could your feeble hand grasp when death has spread its influence over you, and confined you within the limits of a grave? You can show me your servants and retinue; but who can preserve you from the grasp of death, when its icy hand lays hold of you? You can show me your streets and your houses; but in what chamber could you have a hiding place, if the heavens and the earth were to pass away, and the day of the Lord were to come on you as a thief in the night? No, no; you have been of the earth, earthy; and that which is merely earthy is perishable with the earth.

It is of the highest importance that this subject be looked at soberly and properly, in order that man's actual circumstances may be apprehended. It is not enough to say, "I am sick;" for many a person will say he is unwell who does not think himself sufficiently diseased to call in a physician. Many a man will confess he is in debt; but he will by no means admit that he is insolvent. Now, I am afraid that many persons with regard to this doctrine speak in a similar manner. They say they are a little indisposed—they have a slight headache; but it will be well by and by, when they have more leisure to repose themselves. They acknowledge they are in debt; but it is only the arrears of yesterday's business, which they can make up by to-morrow's assiduity. But it will not do for a man to confess that he is sick merely; he must cry out, "From the sole of my foot to the crown of my head, there is no soundness

in me." If he talks about being a debtor to the law of God, he must point to the prison house in which such debtors are immured, and say, "That is my place, and out of that dungeon I cannot come till I have paid the uttermost farthing." Every man must look at it in that way, or he will not apprehend what scriptural conversion is, nor be disposed to thank God for the gift of his Son.

Now, the conversion of the soul is one of the most important subjects to which any congregation can attend. I shall enter somewhat at length into the subject, endeavouring to condense my observations as much as possible; and to them I pray you to give your serious and undivided attention. We do, indeed, preach about the preciousness of salvation and about the easiness of conversion; but I think you will see it is so just, because it is the working of an omnipotent Power—that it is so just because God has the doing of it. And this work of conversion is set before you as being of such gigantic stature, as well as of such swelling breadth and such immeasurable depth, that were you not taught it is God that saves, you would be driven to utter despair.

Let me premise what I have to observe, by stating, that saving conversion to God refers to all men—to man in all his powers and faculties. Let no man deceive himself with the idea that there can be a keeping back from God. The soul of man is a comprehensive term, employed by us to express the various faculties of which that soul is composed. Every whole, of course you know, is made up of parts; and when we talk of the conversion of the soul we must search into it by way of analysis: we must examine what the powers of the soul are, in order to see how they become converted to God.

Now, we begin with *the understanding*. The understanding is that faculty of the mind which especially refers to knowledge and to judgment. It is of the highest importance that that which refers to knowledge and to judgment should be possessed of sufficient energy and vigour, as well as of accuracy of discrimination, in order to select what is valuable for

knowledge to apprehend, and for judgment to decide upon. According to man's original, the whole result of his understanding ought to constitute his rule of conduct; for if that be perfect and complete, and if there be a mind capable of looking at subjects in all their length and breadth, the decision to which the understanding would come ought to be the stimulus for man to attend to or be led on by. Men of the world will think of this; but their understandings are most wofully dim and darkened. Vigorous are the exercises of intellect, I know; and modern times have exhibited instances of this which former periods knew nothing of. You have got your master spirits—men that can make stars their playthings, that can amuse themselves with thunder clouds—men who can play with the watery main, and can say to the troubled waters, "Be still," and who can set wind and tide at defiance. And because men's understandings have reached thus far, there has been the inference drawn, that he has only to apply the same capacity to spiritual subjects, and that that degree of attention which enables him to become a philosopher or mathematician, will enable a man to become a Christian.

We deny the premises, and of course reject the conclusion. It requires some other power besides that of the intellect to apprehend spiritual things—to apprehend clearly such objects as these: the character of God, as revealed in the sacred volume—the nature of holiness, as that holiness is illustrated in every part of revelation—the character of the obedience which God requires—the plan of salvation which Scripture specifies. Now, all these subjects, so very plain in their wording, are matters to be comprehended accurately only by a man whose mind is under divine influence. Conversion is not to be carried on by arithmetical proportion. No man can sit down and draw inferences, and then stand up in a justified state, opening his mind to the letter of the word of God, and understanding it in all its peculiarities. Our minds must be enlightened before we can see glorious things out of the law. Now,

conversion just does this: it enlightens a darkened understanding—"Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of the light." And again: "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling." I put it to any of you who have undergone the process of saving conversion, if you do not marvel at the change in your understanding. It seemed as if you were *bona fide* new creatures. You wonder that when you read your Bible you did not before apprehend it as you do now. You seem to marvel that you did not see clearly God's righteous character—that you did not more clearly comprehend the nature of holiness—that when you looked at obedience you had not a correct notion of the strictness God requires us to exhibit. Lay this down, then, as a necessary part of conversion, that the understanding of man, by which he knows and judges, must be distinctly converted to God—changed from an earthly to a heavenly state.

But more than that—the conversion of the soul has reference to *the conscience of men*. Hence you have St. Paul, in his epistle to Titus, speaking of those whose "consciences are seared with a hot iron." The offices and functions of conscience are, in the unregenerate, miserably performed. Even then, indeed, its voice is heard more distinctly at one time than another: but there is such a hardness about the human heart—such insensibility of mind, such love of the world, such engagements in its pleasures, that that voice passes unheeded: and the voice of conscience, if it speaks loud at one time and be not regarded, seems as though it were insulted by such carelessness; and when it speaks again, it speaks in a feebler accent, by no means so articulate. Thus it is, that in some people it has been speaking less and less distinctly, till I fear whether its whisperings can be heard at all.

Many individuals have overdone the subject, with reference to conscience. They tell me—Thank God, their conscience does not condemn them: if their conscience made them unhappy, then,

indeed, they would turn to God. Many people have added this awful aggravation to their neglect of God; they have hardened their consciences, they have contributed to bring themselves into a hardened state: and man is responsible to God for such transgressions as those. Some have spoken of conscience as the vicegerent of the Almighty in the mind of man. Now, whatever offices conscience may have to perform, and however distinctly it may speak, it must be rectified and regulated by the word of God. No man has a right to set up his conscience as an argument against revelation—no man has a right to set up the silence of his conscience against the direct denunciations of the divine law. They have told me, that conscience is an infallible judge—a judge that hears evidence, examines witnesses, and decides impartially and unerringly. They have told me, that conscience is a constant sentinel; so busily engaged in man that it always keeps watch, and gives kindly intimations when evil is near, that men may escape from it.

Now, all that is grand and striking in poetical expression; it may be pleasing to talk in that kind of manner; but it is not matter of fact. If conscience is this judge, I know that that judge has been corrupted on the bench: he has been bribed by your passions, by your lusts, by your interests, by your prejudices. If conscience is a sentinel, he has slept at his post; for the enemy has come in many a time, and he has not given the least alarm till the enemy had a fast hold of you. Now, it is one part of the work of conversion which I have to speak of to-night, that this conscience is made holy—that it undergoes a change so entire, that from its former obtuseness it becomes exquisitely sensitive; instead of reproving in a whispering voice, it acquires a great distinctness of articulation: it teaches a man immediately—at once admonishes him of what is evil, and disposes him to return from sin and danger to holiness and peace. There is nothing in a man's conscience like saving conversion to God.

Again. *The will of man* is naturally

stubborn and rebellious. Man is like a wild ass's colt. There is no faculty of the mind that seems to have suffered equally with the will: perhaps it was the abuse of that faculty brought sin into the world; and therefore the heaviest curse of God fell on that. Be that as it may, the will of man is stubborn and rebellious. You find fault with your children on that principle: you tell me it is your greatest difficulty to curb their will, and to restrain them; you say they are self-willed and obstinate. Now, all you mean, when you say that, is, that they have one will and that you have another; but you go upon the principle that there is obstinacy and stubbornness in the will somewhere. Now, "men are but children of a larger growth;" and believe me, that that stubbornness of will is not to be rectified by the mere circumstance of our pupilage by others. That will might have been subdued by parental authority, or it might have been broken by masters and governors: but there is still the same character of obstinacy against the Almighty, and repugnance to the will of Jehovah.

Now, in conversion to God, there is a mighty change takes place here: man's will gets subdued; his mind is enlightened to see the infinite value of doing God's will; and though sometimes it is with quivering lips and bleeding heart, yet he is enabled to say, "Not my will, but thine be done." Then man is endued with new affections; he has got the capacity of loving that which is good. His natural affections are entirely misapplied and disordered; and no small part of our wretchedness in this world originates in that—that our affections are misapplied and disordered. Either of these two things will account for the greater portion of our sorrows. If our affections are entirely misapplied, we are giving our heart, with all its powers, to a worthless object: and so it is, that a man who loves the world never can be happy; for to be happy there must be a return of love—there must be a reciprocity, a getting back again in the way of kindly feeling. That is one great reason why worldly men are so unhappy; they let

their heart's best affections go forth on objects that have no feeling—they fix their hearts on money, or rank, or pleasure, which will yield them no affection in return.

And then, as to worthy objects, our affections ought to be restrained. There is a possibility of loving lawful objects unduly. There is this great tendency in all of us to misplace our affections: and so it is that men's hopes are blasted, because they have carried their affection to too great an extent: and then you talk of broken-hearted men—men who have died of grief, and tell me of a man who placed all his hopes on one frail bark, and it went down before his eyes. Now, in conversion, there is a taking away of the affections from improper objects, and this is the commandment given to the spirit, which is made capable of obeying it—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength." Then, it is soothing for us, as children of God, to love all those objects which attract and fascinate and give play to our hearts' best feelings, and allowing our love to warm and brighten into all its heat and all its brilliancy, and knowing we cannot love Him too much who gave his Son to die for us.

Such is our idea of conversion to God. And I put it to you, whether it be not a great work—a great work to enlighten your dark minds, to subdue your stubborn wills, to purify your affections, and to rectify your consciences; and to make that soul, which has been hitherto the seat of all that is evil and malevolent, the very temple of the indwelling God.

Now, that this is a subject that demands our attention, appears from the very nature of it: man cannot be acceptable to God without conversion. I cannot on this enlarge: allow me to beg the question, to take it for granted, that conversion is something that is needed at some time, at least; and I proceed,

*Secondly,* To exhibit some of the sources of your delay, and to expose their folly. It is not often we meet with individuals who sit under the word, who will altogether ridicule the work of conversion; but you regard it as a subject

which ought, at some time, to claim your serious attention. You have to exercise, some of you, no common ingenuity to keep your minds in any thing like quiet, during your rebellion against God. Will you allow me, then, to solicit your attention while I specify some of the sources of delay, and expose their folly? And if happily I touch upon the reason why you have not given yourselves to God, and turned to him with all your hearts, you may weigh what is advanced, and pray that God will give it force if it be true.

In the first place, perhaps, you have delayed on *account of pretended principle*. You have said—"I have heard from many of you ministers, and am aware myself, of my own weakness, of my utter inability to do any thing of myself—that no man cometh to the Father except he be drawn: and therefore, seeing I am this very weak creature, I have resolved to wait till that power be communicated which is necessary for me, and then, when God visits me, I have made up my mind to turn to God."

Now, all that sounds very speciously; and it is what might be expected from such a casuist as Satan; for when he turns commentator on the word of God, he is very ready at expedients. But look at it for a moment. We acknowledge, of course, the propriety of what you say—that without God you can do nothing; it is perfectly true, and any remarks I may make must not be considered as militating against the doctrine of the absolute necessity of divine interference and influence. God must "work in you to will and to do;" but you forget the former part of the verse, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." I fearlessly and solemnly affirm, that, in reference to many triflers, God has done and is doing all that he has covenanted to do. God has worked, and is working. God has given you conviction of mind of your weakness; God has given you sensibility of conscience; God has given you feeling under the word;

God has given you an inclination to pray: you have the word of God, and you hear it read; you hear the preaching of the word;—I ask you, then, in the name of all that is solemn, what you expect more? What more does that man who is waiting God's time expect, than God has done for him, by putting his word and the means of grace before him? Must God take you and compel you to enter in? God stands at the door and knocks: God does not break the door open; God takes no man to heaven against his will; no man gets to heaven without his own consent. While his good Spirit is operating, you ought to be co-workers with Christ: not that there is merit in you; but without such co-operation, sure I am, that where God is you cannot come.

Then, see to what a position your declaration of waiting God's good time will bring you. You seem to have made up your mind to God's good time. Now, God's good time is the present time: "*Now* is the accepted time—*now* is the day of salvation." Now, God is consistent with himself: God would never have said, "Now is the accepted time—now is the day of salvation," if the person whose eye rested on that passage desired salvation, and he was not ready to communicate it to him at that time. Dear brethren, pray to God: lay aside those foolish thoughts, and use the means that are presented to you; and you shall find, that in the use of those means there shall be an increase of grace.

Another source of delay is, *that conversion is unnecessary, in the very strict sense in which we speak of it to you*. You tell me you have very good feelings and inclinations toward religion, but that really we talk too much about this conversion. If we talk about men being moral and good, why, every man would applaud us: but to go beyond actions to principles—to lay the soul open by a species of spiritual anatomy, dissecting its veins and its fibres—to exhibit all its workings of good and evil,—this we think is going too far; and conversion is not necessary in that strict sense. Now, let us look at that. There is an admission that some

change is necessary. I acknowledge I should like to know the precise point where we can stop short. Is it that our understanding should not be quite enlightened? Is it that it is well to have the will partly subdued, but not quite? Is it that it is well to have the conscience a little rectified, but not quite? Is it that it is well to have the affections purified, but only in part? There must be a perfect character about that principle which is to make man a happy creature: he must be altogether changed if he is to be acceptable to God. A conversion that does not change him altogether, does not reach his case. What should you think of an individual, professing to be a physician, who being called in to see a patient labouring under several diseases—diseases, however, originating in the debility of the whole constitution,—what should you think of him if, on seeing many wounds on different parts of the body, he should say—"I don't see any necessity for your being cured altogether, and your health entirely restored; but it will be enough that that wound be healed, and that this wound be healed, and that we partly heal this great wound that you have in such a part; and then I shall turn you out as one that is to enjoy the world around you?" Such a physician would have little practice, and would deserve no character except that of a madman. Just the same species of reasoning is applicable to those who go part of the way of conversion, but not the whole.

Another source of hesitancy arises from *false conceptions of its nature*. Men of the world say it is something very gloomy—that we must bid good-by to all that gladdens the heart, and all things that are likely to be attractive. And where, my friend, did you learn that? Tell us where you heard that news? Was it when you were standing by the death-bed of an aged servant of the Lord? Did he tell you what a fool he had been to serve God so many years? Did he charge you not to be such a fool as he was? and did he tell you he had been a miserable and unhappy creature all his life long? Was it there you heard it? Tell the

truth, and you will tell that that dying saint rejoiced that God had been the guide of his youth; and you saw that he was his support in death.

Different is the scene at the death-bed of mere worldlings. I have often thought, that worldlings might get a salutary lesson from the death of Cardinal Wolsey. You recollect his being stript of his authority and dignities, and the sentiments which he uttered on his death-bed,—

"Had I but served my God with half the zeal  
I served my king, he would not thus  
Have left me naked to mine enemies."

No; God abandons none of his children in the hour of death, nor leaves them in their weakness and sufferings. It is the world—it is the devil that leads men on till he gets them into scenes of wretchedness and despair, when he rejoices in their unhappiness, and seems to riot in their misery.

Religion make a man miserable and unhappy! Let us look at it. Religion has to do with man's mind. Now, the greatest portion of our misery has to do with our minds. Religion takes away all the sources of a man's disquiet: it is a very singular thing, then, that these are taken away only to make him unhappy. It is a very singular thing that my understanding becomes enlightened, my will subdued, my passions become rectified,—and yet that I am unhappy. A great deal of my worldly distress arises from my affections being improperly fixed; strange that when they get properly placed, I should be more wretched than I was before. No; to say that religion makes a man unhappy, is the consummation of ignorance and error. Piety enables a rational being to get his mind enlightened—a helpless being to lean on an all-powerful arm—a sinful creature to trust in the Saviour for pardon—a fallen creature to look to a Deliverer. These are exceedingly strong causes for making men unhappy, certainly! No; it is a stratagem of the devil:

"Religion never was design'd  
To make our pleasures less."

But another and a very fatal source of

delay, arises from the idea, *that the means of effecting conversion are always within our reach*. Many persons have sat under the word and heard it preached so faithfully, and its simplicity so often described, that, having become familiar with it, they really have thought it one of the easiest things in the world. They have only to wait till they get into a dilemma; then they have to put their hands in their bosom, or God knows where, and they have the power to alter the whole bent and disposition of their minds. Believers as we are in the doctrine of general redemption, we countenance no such doctrine as that. We recognise the doctrine of the divine influence: there is a grieving of the Holy Ghost, there is a resisting, there is a fighting against him and insulting him, till he hopelessly abandons the man with whom he has been striving. "Ephraim is joined to his idols,—let him alone." And if there is any man who is in the highway to be given up to remediless perdition, it is the man who systematically procrastinates the work of conversion.

Another source of delay is from *the prospect of lengthened life*. This appears to be a leading cause of the delay of many. Were some commissioned angel from heaven to enter this place to-night, and to declare the names of one hundred unconverted persons in this chapel, and say, that before the setting sun of the next Lord's day every one would be laid in his grave, I would answer for it there would be an impression on their minds as to the reality of the message, and but little necessity to say another word. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," would be instantly recollected and acted upon. Ah! to talk about next Sabbath night, is to talk of a great distance. If it were to-morrow night, it might be true of some of us. Of all delusions this is the most fatal. If religion be worth having at all, it is worth having now, and is worthy the consecration of all the powers and faculties of your minds.

And what more shall I say? *Instant decision ought to be made on this subject.*

Some of you have delayed till a more convenient time should arrive: I ask you now to look at the circumstances in which you are placed, and tell me whether that time has not come? Your life has become more uncertain; its brittle thread has become more attenuated; divine influence is operating more powerfully; you have fresh offers of salvation made to you. What could be better? What more suitable? What can God do more? Must he be compelled to do something stronger? Is it not enough that he has taken one member of your family away—must he strip you altogether? Is it not enough that he has entered into your city and into your streets, but must he enter into your houses? Must he cut every tie of earthly enjoyment, that your hearts may be drawn up to him? Ah! see that you compel not God thus to act, "lest he swear in his wrath that ye shall not enter into his rest:" but yielding to those holy influences under which many of you, I believe, are consecrating your hearts to God, and devoting your lives to his service, remember, that "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest." May God command his blessing, for his name's sake! Amen.

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#### JERUSALEM AND ITS VICINITY.

LIKE many other cities of the east, the distant view of Jerusalem is inexpressibly beautiful: but the distant view is all. On entering at the Damascus gate, meanness, and filth, and misery, not exceeded, if equalled, by any thing which I had before seen, soon told the tale of degradation. "How is the fine gold become dim!"

Thus I went onward, pitying every thing and everybody that I saw,—till, turning off to the right, and having passed up what is called the "Via Dolorosa," from its being the supposed path of our Lord when he bore his cross on the way to his crucifixion, we at length alighted at the Greek convent of Mar Michael.

During the first few hours after our arrival in the holy city, there was little to stir up the heart to a lively feeling, that this is really that venerable and beloved place, renowned above all others in Scripture. Hunger, fatigue, and the cheerlessness of an eight hours' ride over a peculiarly desolate tract of country, with no other refreshment than a small jar of boiled rice and some bread, would have been agreeably relieved by the welcome of pleasant countenances, sufficient food, and a warm room: but our apartments, which had not been occupied for six months, were flooded and vaulted with stone,—fireplaces are unknown in this land,—our provisions were all to seek; and, at this late hour of the day, scarcely to be found. Hadjee Demetrius, the servant of the convent, in a sort of broken Turco-Grecian dialect, proffered his tedious and awkward services,—the baggage was to be looked after,—the mercenary and clamorous guides were to be (not satisfied: that was an impossibility; but) settled with and dismissed;—and, lastly, as if to diffuse a perfect sadness over our arrival, the storm which had threatened and slightly touched us during the latter part of our stage, now began to fall in torrents, similar to those which had buffeted us on the preceding evening near Sangyl. Every thing combined to inspire a feeling of melancholy,—congenial enough to those emotions with which the actual civil and religious condition of Jerusalem deserves now to be contemplated; but, in no degree harmonizing with those sublimer and more glorious thoughts, which the very name of this city generally awakens in the bosom of the Christian.

When the evening had closed, however, and the hour of retirement, devotion, and repose arrived, all that I had ever anticipated as likely to be felt on reaching this place, gradually came into my mind, and filled me with the most lively consciousness of delight at being in Jerusalem. "This,"—I thought,—“is no other than the city of David. Hither the queen of the south came to hear the wisdom of

Solomon. Isaiah here poured forth strains of evangelic rapture, which will glow with unspent warmth till the end of time. Here the building of the second temple drew from the beholders mingled shouts and tears; and, here was that very temple, made more glorious than the first, by the entrance of ‘the Desire of all nations, the Messenger of the covenant!’ Here, after he had rebuilt the temple of his own body, he began the wondrous work of raising a spiritual temple to his Father, —shedding abundantly upon his disciples the gift of the Holy Ghost, for which they waited in this very city; and then sending them forth as his ‘witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth.’”

Such were the principal thoughts, with which I had for some months associated this visit; and, now, all were gradually presented to my mind.

I felt, I confess, no particular anxiety to see what are called the “Holy Places.” Many have hastened to offer their first devotions at the sepulchre of our Lord: so far from having this desire, I feel somewhat of repugnance at the idea: it is enough for me to know that I am not far from that scene;—that Gethsemane, and Calvary, and “the place where the Lord lay,” are all so near to me, that I can truly say, I am dwelling in the midst of them. All this, too, my heart can better conceive in the stillness of the night season, than by the light of day. And he, who suffered here, still lives,—“Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever!” Spiritually he is as near to me, as he would have been had I seen him, this very day, at the ninth hour, expiring upon the cross: the blood then shed is still fresh in its efficacy, and “cleanseth us from all sin.” If to have come hither should prove the means of raising me one degree higher in love to this adorable Redeemer, I would be thankful: but let me remember, that he desires us chiefly to view him with the eye of faith; and that, although “we see him not” in the flesh, “yet, believing, we may rejoice in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”—*Jowett.*

## SERMON XXXVIII.

SEASONS OF TRIAL, TIMES OF PREPARATION.

BY THE REV. A. ROBERTSON, A.M.

*“And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath.”—Mark xv. 42.*

THE unrenewed mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. It is conformed to the world, and is prepared only to act in things pertaining to the present life. The individual who is influenced by religious principles, while he is not slothful in business, is also fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Things seen and temporal have a tendency to carnalize the affections, and we are apt to forget whence we come, what we are doing, and whither we are going. He, therefore, who is preparing for a happy immortality, gladly embraces seasons, peculiarly devoted to the concerns of the soul. The Sabbath, in its regular return, is intended to arrest the current of our worldly thoughts, to remind us of our common origin, of the one way of access to the Father, of death, and of eternity. In the estimation of every fearer of God, therefore, the Sabbath has a retrospective and a prospective aspect. A pious divine has justly remarked, that one part of the week is properly adapted for reflection, and the other for preparation. These acts of the mind should be more intense, in proportion as we are the more immediately connected with the Sabbath. Though the Jews, at the period referred to in our text, had sadly degenerated, yet customs, which originated in times of piety, were observed even by those among them who were actuated merely by a form of religion. Saturday evenings, generally, and particularly those preceding festivals, were seasons of preparation; and while

the pious Jew endeavoured to dismiss worldly cares from his mind, and made arrangements suitable to the proper observance of the Sabbath, the arrangements of the nation generally were in accordance with the solemnities of a day of spiritual rest. Hence, though the week about to be closed had been disgraced by scenes of maddening violence, the evening of Saturday no sooner arrived, than anxiety is manifested, that the Sabbath should be observed with accustomed decency. This wish was commendable, though its origin can be traced merely to sanctioned use. Many pious persons, among ourselves, are accustomed to devote Saturday evening to preparatory meditation; and notwithstanding the laxness of principle, and the prevalence of impiety in the present day, the manner in which Saturday evenings are spent serves as a fair test of character to try the moral state of our population. By many, that evening is sadly abused, because that it is in immediate connexion with a day which they pollute, and their preparation for the Sabbath is in unison with their known principles of action. Among a choice few, to whom the Sabbath is a delight, and honourable, in “remembering the Sabbath” they forget not preparatory exercises, and as far as leisure permits, Saturday evening is employed as the direct stage from a week’s business to a Sabbath’s fervency of spirit. The text, therefore, authorizes us to press upon you the propriety of spending Saturday

evening as a preparation for the exercises of the ensuing day. This idea, however, we merely notice in passing, and we leave it for your private consideration, and we request your attention to other ideas of still greater importance suggested by the text. A time of preparation, generally, is a season of trial, and is painful to flesh and blood. Examination, confession, and humility are as congenial to a Saturday evening, as adoration, gratitude, and praise are to a Sabbath night. Training is not enjoyment, but the means by which it is acquired. The way to heaven is through a wilderness and by a vale of tears. Times of refreshing revivals, Sabbaths to the church, are ushered in by a night of preparation, often dark and portentous. The present is an era of conflicting principles, a night of preparation, and having past, we anticipate a Sabbath on which the Sun of righteousness shall shine, in bright effulgence, to dispel the darkness in which we are at present enveloped. What may be said of the state of the church is also true of every individual; it is a time of preparation, because every individual is either preparing for happiness or misery. These two ideas we intend to illustrate in the following discourse.

*First,* TIMES OF PREPARATION IN THE CHURCH ARE SEASONS OF TRIAL.

*Secondly,* LIFE IS A TIME OF PREPARATION FOR EVERY INDIVIDUAL, AND EITHER WORKS FOR HIS GOOD OR EVIL ACCORDING AS HE IS EXERCISED.

Every individual who is acquainted with the history of the church, knows that it has undergone various changes. It is subject to incessant fluctuations, and either is progressing or retrograding. Such a state of things may be expected, under the spiritual warfare in which the church is engaged. The existence of Satan is distinctly stated in the Bible, and from 1st Timothy iii. 6, the cause of his expulsion from heaven seems to have been pride—a feeling which, succeeding to unbelief in our first parents, through Satan's agency, expelled them from paradise. From Jude, verse 6, we learn the place of his habitation. His disposition is de-

scribed by the terms—Satan the stumbling-block—the Devil an accuser—Apollyon the destroyer—a serpent, cunning—a lion, savage and destructive—not only a murderer, but a murderer from the beginning—and not only a liar, but the father of lies. As a potentate, he is over the powers of darkness, and is the prince of the powers of the air. The world lieth in wickedness, or in the evil one, expresses the extent of his dominion, and Legion shows that his agents are many. His direct agency on the mind of man is incontrovertible. He entered the heart of Judas. He tempted David to number the children of Israel; and without adding quotations, it is sufficient to state, that he rules in the hearts of the disobedient.

Though the manner in which Satan influences the mind of man is above reason, yet this doctrine harmonizes with Scripture and experience. If we deny the agency of Satan because incomprehensible, on the same grounds, we may also deny the agency of the Divine Spirit. Both are received on the authority of the Bible, and both are known to us from their effects. If both are denied because incomprehensible, on the same principle we may deny that angels ever communicated any thing to the mind of man in dreams and visions. If such communications are granted, why not grant that other communications may be made to the mind of man? If supposed to be made by angels through the medium of the senses, cannot Satan, as a created angel, influence our mind through the same channel? The organs of sense, besides, are not essential in communications from mind to mind, for unembodied angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect, enjoy the society of each other, and therefore what we cannot comprehend we believe from experience, analogy, and, above all, from the express declarations of Scripture.

Satan does not possess one attribute of infinity; but, though fallen, he possesses all the qualities of a mighty, created, intelligence, which fit him for his station over the powers of darkness, and as the prince of the power of the air; and having numbers at his command,

they accomplish as far as they are permitted his mandates. In exact proportion as the heart is impure, so is the influence of Satan; and when the heart plans and evinces its wicked determinations by actions, Satan, seeing its prevailing tendencies, suggests, encourages, and excites. It is remarkable that Satan in tempting our first parents, and afterwards in tempting our Saviour, assumed a bodily form, and one, in each case, adapted to the prepossessions of those he assailed. Whether, in tempting innocence, this indirect method is necessary, we do not at present inquire; but this we know from the Scripture representation, that in an invisible manner he influences the mind of fallen man.

The world in Scripture is uniformly spoken of as a platform on which a mighty contest is maintained between heaven and hell. When a check is given to Satan's power, his malice is increased, and the movements of both parties excite a commotion, which ultimately produces the most beneficial effects. The decreasing of his influence excites his wrath, and this excitement in the moral world is overruled by God, for the promotion of piety; and Satan, baffled in his schemes, adopts new plans of resistance; and, thus, though the contest continues unabated, the struggle is more or less severe, according to the extent of the moral change to be made in the world.

Principles, besides, have their due influence only when legitimately applied. The church is not merely in the midst of enemies, but, she only can maintain her position by continued vigilance, and unceasing exertion. Security begets confidence, and this state produces, on the one hand, indifference, and, on the other, renewed activity. The friends and foes, besides, in this contest, possess not the same determination to defend their respective cause. The mind of man naturally is set on evil, and the adherents of Satan, in opposing the interests of true religion, are gratifying their natural propensities. Those who are on the side of God are determined in their conduct, just in proportion as they are renewed in the spirit of their mind. The remains of indwell-

ing corruption within their hearts inclines them to listen to the suggestions of their enemies, and hence their principles of action lose gradually their legitimate influence. A process of assimilation thus commences, and continues, till it is arrested by divine agency. Exposed to trial, the church is aroused from her lethargy, and as is the extent of her apostasy, so must be the severity of her trial, the process of refinement through which she must pass, to regain among the children of men her proper influence. In effecting this change, those who are on the side of God are exposed to several privations. In giving a tone to their minds suitable to the conflict in which they are to engage, prepossessions must be overcome, prejudices subdued, and a spirit imbibed, which, in the first instance at least, counteracts more or less their inclinations. In other words, they must submit to a system of training, to which human nature has an aversion. On abstract principles, therefore, it is evident that preparation implies trial. In the nature of things, we arrive at this conclusion, and independently of facts, we may be satisfied of the necessary connexion between a state of trial and a state of improvement in the church. Truths, however, proved by abstract principles, make a feeblér impression on the mind of man, than the same truths embodied in examples. Hence, in the Bible, generally, instruction is furnished to us from examples, and this palpable method is used on the most important occasions. The faith of Abraham is illustrated by actions, which lead us irresistibly to the conclusion, that he was the friend of God, and justly is called the Father of the faithful. The goodness of God in redemption, likewise, is strikingly exemplified; for "in this was manifested the love of God towards us; because, that God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him." In accordance, therefore, with this mode of Bible instruction, we shall prove from a few examples, that the time of preparation is a season of trial. These words "so God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him,"

are beautifully significant. They remind us of the moral condition of man at creation. All his wishes were in unison with the will of his Creator. His desires rose in regular order, and were seasonably gratified. In spontaneous movement, his heart heaved with gratitude to his benefactor, and his lips imbodied in accents of praise the feelings of his mind. A change soon was effected. The voice of temptation was heard, listened to, and obeyed. The poison of the serpent swallowed, moral death ensued. The celestial fire which burned in his breast at creation was extinguished, and the moral image of God effaced. Disbelief produced distrust, pride urged to rebellion, and the forbidden fruit plucked, gave decisive proof of man's moral condition. Reasoning led to despair, and hope, the last stay of man, left the earth. "Adan, where art thou?" connected the past with the future, and filled the mind of man with bitter regrets and unavailing wishes. This period in the history of the church was a time of preparation, and a season of trial. From the fall to the promise of a deliverer, trials, severe and unprecedented, were endured by our first parents. They had lost happiness and innocence, entailed misery on an expected race, and subjected themselves and posterity to the horrors of a violated law. Their conduct was disgraced by disbelief, pride, ingratitude, and imbecility; and tears were all that remained for them, or anguish, too deeply seated in the heart, to allow even the enjoyment of that relief. Angels cannot suffer pain, but circumstances of a peculiar nature may awaken keenly their curiosity, and so excite their benevolence as to raise in their breast a turmoil of feeling. If, of them it ever could, with justice, be said, "they sat retired in wondering mazes lost," it was at the eventful period to which we have referred. Their sympathies were awakened for man, and yet the wish that mercy would operate in his behalf, led to consequences at which their pure minds instantly revolted. Reasoning on the moral character of their Creator, and reflecting on the consequence of the rebellion of the fallen

angels, they were convinced of the necessary connexion between disobedience and punishment. Every view of the case made them acquiesce in the immediate infliction of that sentence, "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." This time of preparation to man was a season of despair, and to angels, of perplexing thought. It was an even of preparation before no expected Sabbath, —the mere interval of respite from merited and anticipated punishment. During this period of preparation, light arose from darkness. In the garden of Eden, God appeared, in the cool of the day, rebuked his rebellious children, and in the relents of parental affection, announced a plan of mercy worthy of his character, and exactly adapted to the state of his fallen creatures. How pleasant to our first parents would be the transition from despair to hope. In preparation as the even of preparation was severe and trying, so would be the enjoyment of the spiritual exercises on the Sabbath which followed. The wrath of Satan made to praise God, in additional honour and blessedness procured for the justified and sanctified of the human race, and new aspects of character exhibited in the Godhead, would astonish and enrapture the angelic host; and if ever their feelings of ecstasie admiration were strung to their highest pitch, it was when, in the overflowings of compassion, the Creator said, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

The land of Canaan was promised to the patriarchs, as a sure inheritance to their posterity. Their descendants in Egypt seem not to have been anxious for the fulfilment of God's promise. They were prosperous, and their minds were unprepared for such an event. "And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty, and the land was filled with them." God's ways are not man's ways; and before the fulfilment of the promised deliverance, his people had to endure an even of preparation. "Now there arose up a new

king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph." "And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour, and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage." This was the dawn of mental preparation, but sharper trials were necessary to loosen their attachment to Egypt. Additional burdens imposed, subdue their spirits, and widen the breach between them and their oppressors. "And the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage; and they cried, and their cry came up unto God." When Moses and Aaron first interceded in their behalf, their case was hopeless in the extreme. Under the power of a haughty and imperious tyrant, escape from his territories seemed impossible, and complaints rendered their bondage more intolerable. The faith of the pious Israelites might be strong in the veracity of God; but every event seemed in direct opposition to the accomplishment of their wishes, and the fulfilment of God's promises. Those who calculated merely from appearances, would pronounce their deliverance to be an impossibility, and would endeavour to resign themselves to circumstances which they could not control. All passing events, however, were overruled by God, to the confusion of their oppressors, and to give the minds of his own people a proper bias for the mode of life on which they were to enter. While Pharaoh was hardening, they were softening. Their even of preparation was come, and with a strong hand, and outstretched arm, they were delivered from bondage. Their even of preparation, however, was not past, when they triumphantly marched from the confines of their prison house; for though they were prepared to leave Egypt, they were unprepared to enter Canaan. Trial after trial happened, and wonder succeeded wonder, in their wanderings in the wilderness; and, while every occurrence was intended for their mental preparation, their history serves as a lesson-book to every succeeding age. God generally accomplishes his ends by making passing events subservient to his will. The sighs of the children of Israel, in Egypt, were the notes of preparation for songs of tri-

umph. Those who were qualified to appreciate deliverance from thralldom, were unworthy to possess a land, flowing with milk and honey. The carcasses of a rebellious race fell in the wilderness; and a generation, reared during an even of preparation, enjoyed the rest of the promised land. "And the Lord said, Because all those men which have seen my glory and my miracles which I did in Egypt, and in the wilderness, have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice, surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it. But my servant, Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereunto he went, and his seed shall possess it. But your little ones which ye said would be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the Lord which ye have despised."

If we fix our attention on that even of preparation referred to in the text, and connect with it past events, and those which immediately succeeded, we will be fully convinced that a time of preparation is a season of trial. After the Babylonish captivity, the Jews were little given to idolatry. The means of instruction were more widely diffused, and, with this change of circumstances, the carnality of their heart operated in new channels. Satan adapted his temptations to their moral state, and while externally they worshipped God, the internal homage of the heart was withheld. Their religion was a form of godliness, without its power. The Essenes retired from the noisy crowd, practised austerities, and gratified their morbid temperament. They were the monks and nuns of Judaism, and yielded to passions which should have been resisted by divinely appointed means; and, instead of contending against the vices of the times, they deserted their posts, and injured themselves and society. The Sadducees were the infidels of the old dispensation. Reason was their idol, pride their actuating principle, and present gratification the consummation of their wishes. The Pharisees

were the representatives of the religious people among the Jews. This is the reason why our Saviour uniformly reproves them with marked severity. They wished to be reckoned truly religious, but the Saviour traced their religious principles to selfish motives, and all these pretensions, to the desire of gaining the applause of men. Attention to ceremonies and vain tradition, made a good Pharisee, though by him the sanctification of his heart was neglected. At this period the heathen nations lay prostrate at the feet of Satan; and the Jews, with few exceptions, yielded to his will. During this even of preparation, Simeon had a few sons, and Anna some daughters, who observed the aspect of the times, and waited for the consolation of Israel. The sceptre had departed from Judah, and every event seemed to hasten the grand consummation, foretold by the prophets. An astonishing personage appeared, in whom their hopes centred. With wisdom unequalled, benevolence unwearied, and power uncontrollable, he seemed to be the desire of all nations. Hosannas ascend to his praise, and he is welcomed as the anticipated deliverer of Israel. He announces that his kingdom is not of this world, and the crowd cease their acclamations—he reproves vice, and sinners overawed retire, determined on his destruction. The disappointed change their wishes into accusations. Envy brooded over his virtues, and could not bear the contrast. The reproved thirsted for revenge, and all joined in the cry, Away with him, crucify him, crucify him. The hour and the power of darkness was come, and the Saviour of mankind was apprehended, insulted, and nailed to the accursed tree, between two malefactors. The sun was ashamed to witness such a scene, and was vested in darkness; and nature murmured her complaints in thunder—the earth shook and parted her rocks asunder. The Saviour bowed his head and gave up the ghost. This was, if not the hour of despair to spiritual Israelites, at least it was the even of preparation—the season of trial. Even those who had imbibed the spirit of prophecy, had much

to agitate and perplex their minds. The promises of God they could not doubt, but how they were to receive fulfilment was beyond their comprehension. The faithful disciples were scattered as sheep without a shepherd. The mangled body of the Saviour was entombed; and hope, though still lingering in the breast, scarcely durst embody a wish. The Jewish Sabbath passed, next morning the Christian Sabbath dawned, and a slumbering Saviour burst the bands of death asunder, triumphed over death, and him who had the power of death. The preparation over, the trial in the divine economy had accomplished its purpose, and a different scene is now presented to our contemplation. A triumphant Saviour, enraptured disciples, a stupified sanhedrim, an amazed multitude, a conqueror ascending on high, bearing gifts for men, the Spirit bestowed on Pentecost, the heralds of the cross endowed with miraculous gifts, numbers added to the church, and Christianity proclaimed throughout the vast extent of the Roman empire. The night of diffidence, doubt, and perplexity, was the immediate harbinger of confidence, assurance, and clear manifestations of Heaven's approbation. In proportion as the even of preparation was awfully portentous, and severely trying, so were the triumphs which followed, and the pleasures which the faithful enjoyed.

The same topic we might strikingly illustrate from events which occurred at the reformation. An infidel pope, the sale of indulgencies, and marked degeneracy among the clergy and laity, were unpropitious harbingers of better times. The persecuted few, the seed of the church, under the various names of Waldenses, Hugonots, and Lollards, the invention of printing, and the reading of a Bible by an obscure monk, were the divinely appointed means to change this eve of preparation into the splendid dawn of the reformation. These and similar topics, which will readily occur to reflecting minds, we leave for private meditation, and shortly apply to present times the principles which we have illustrated.

Among Christians who observe passing

events, and consider their bearing, the general opinion seems to be, that the present is an even of preparation. Wonderful events have of late happened in the world. A mere glance at the aspect of society, is sufficiently convincing that its appearance is portentous. The changes in South America, in Africa generally—the spirit of freedom imbibed by the states of Europe—the desired amelioration of oppressed operatives, and the emancipation of slaves—the spread of knowledge—the union of mankind by commerce—the translations of the Scriptures—the prevalent desire for temperance—the revivals in America, and the spread of the gospel—are some of the signs of the times, from which preparation, a Sabbath of spiritual refreshment may be anticipated. Heathenism is gradually decreasing, and the active exertions of missionary and Bible societies, have prepared the way for extensive inroads into Satan's kingdom. Popery on the Continent is on the wane. France never was a favourite daughter of his holiness. Too volatile for the austerities of a debasing superstition, under the name of popery, in varied forms, she worshipped the goddess Reason. The reserved Spaniard, and haughty Italian, are clamorous under the thraldom of an ignorant and tyrannical priesthood. The delusion of Mahomet is rapidly declining, and Mahometans themselves acknowledge that a change seems inevitable. The power of the Sultan is gradually lessening from the inroads of Persia, Russia, and Egypt. Egypt, in the language of prophecy, the "basest of kingdoms," seems to have completed her degradation, and the fulfilment of that remarkable passage is not far distant:—"The Lord shall smite Egypt, he shall smite and heal it, and they shall return to the Lord, and he shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them." If the Jews are to be restored to their own land, on their conversion, Palestine is of so little value to its present possessors, that were it demanded for its former inhabitants, it would scarcely be withheld. The issue of present events is necessarily involved in much obscurity, but connecting the aspect of the times with the sure word of

prophecy, the faith of the Christian leads him, from this even of preparation, to a Sabbath about to dawn on a spiritually benighted slumbering world. True, as yet, we see on the horizon merely an ominous cloud of small size, but it is rapidly increasing, and will soon descend in fertilizing showers, upon a parched world. Satan yet holds his sway, seemingly undiminished among the nations, but the Captain of our salvation, going forth conquering and to conquer, will rescue his prey from the hand of the mighty, and with the rapidity of lightning from heaven, the power of Satan may decline. Times of refreshing we may anticipate from the presence of the Lord, and the present commotions, political and religious, may be the appointed preparation to effect this desirable end.

Our even of preparation, as a nation, is peculiar, and may be one of no ordinary trial. With us it is a conflicting era of opinion; the struggle of principle and the war of party. We are not heathenized, beguiled by delusion, degraded by superstition, or devoted to infidelity. We are a compound of the whole, and the idol of our worship is neither an image of clay, nor iron, nor brass, nor gold. We are a discordant mass, and require to be harmonized by a powerful divine agency. Not one half of our population are church-going, and we have, in general, more of the form than the power of godliness. The saintly virtues of past times are chronicled, not exemplified. Our standard of spirituality is lowered by yielding to the influence of deteriorating example. Our light shines enough in words, but too little in works. Where there is found a knowledge of Bible principles, in too many cases there is an aversion to their just self-application. Our sympathies are awakened at moral misery in the mass, but the detail, as it meets our every day observation, is little regarded. The schemes of modern times are truly characteristic of our Christianity. We do things on a grand scale, but by grasping at too much, the individuality of religion escapes our observation, and we feel disappointed that the effect does not correspond to the means employed. Our

Sabbath-schools are justly extolled as moral nurseries for training youth; but many seem to consider them as a primary, and not a secondary means for this end; and, hence, in the present day, we too seldom hear the pressing call to parents, the natural guardians of youthful morality, to become spiritual teachers in the endearing circle of home. A mighty moral machine is kept in action, and humble exertions in retirement are not sufficiently guided, aided or respected, and their collected effect scarcely recognised. The translating of the Bible, and the sending it by missionaries to heathen lands, was an attempt worthy of united Christian philanthropy, but in the splendours of such a dazzling scheme we overlooked the mass of our population perishing for lack of knowledge. We need not give additional examples, for it cannot be denied that even our most laudable efforts have little tendency to self-application, and the effect is the prevalence of nominal Christianity and infidelity in various grades among the different classes of society.

This state of things has favoured the increase of popery, infidelity and ungodliness. Popery is addressed to the senses, the religion of the unsanctified nature, in every possible variety, under the semblance of Christianity. Modified in this country to existing circumstances, it is peculiarly insnaring to the unstable and imaginative, and an increasing ignorant population readily embrace it, because it so easily coalesces with the spontaneous movements of their unspiritualized hearts. Unitarianism is a species of religion more subtle in its elements, and peculiarly adapted for a certain class of minds. Assuming an appearance of reasoning, it allows of mental efforts, flatters natural pride, cherishes the spirit of infidelity under disguise, and furnishes apologies for moral wanderings, which make a few separatists so eagerly pursue this meagre phantom. Impiety is the offspring of folly, for the fool alone has the wish—No God. A heart set on evil is the source of ungodliness and ignorance, and evil habits combined make it assume its most revolting forms.

To counteract this state of society, means in our power should be employed, and, blessed from on high, our even of preparation may usher in a Sabbath on which many weary souls may find rest. Speculation in religion must yield to the self-application of principles, and we must discriminate more correctly between their legitimate use and abuse. Parents should be urged and directed to rear their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and neglected youth committed to foster parents, ardent, experienced, and pious Sabbath-school teachers. Artificial barriers should be overthrown, and plans adopted for the instruction of our spiritually destitute population. Pride and envy, the sources of partisanship, must merge into brotherly kindness, and the war of party now raging must cease, and a spiritual crusade be undertaken against sin, Satan, and the world. Christians having one Lord, one faith, and one baptism, should leave minor differences to jarring spirits, and unite in the godlike enterprise of spreading the triumphs of the cross. Pastors must come more frequently in contact with their flocks, and discipline be regulated by the word of God. All the means which should be adopted we attempt not to enumerate, but our duty done, conscience will approve, and the result must be left to a wise overruling providence. "Trust in the Lord and do good," is the motto worthy to be inscribed on every Christian banner unfurled in the cause of Christianity. Perhaps, as a nation, the dawn of preparation has only commenced, and severe trials we may have to endure, before we are prepared to enjoy the glory of the latter day. For a time we must sojourn in the wilderness to acquire a temper of mind fitted to enter Canaan. In our camp the rebellious must be visited with sore judgments, and the carcasses of the unbelieving must fall by the way, but our Calebs who followed the Lord shall enter the promised land. Our Joshuas shall lead the host of the Lord from victory to victory, and the angel of the covenant shall be our defence. A cloud by day shall overshadow the ransomed ones, and a pillar of fire by night direct their path,

till their wanderings are over and their trials passed, they enter the heavenly Jerusalem with songs of praise, to eat for ever angels' food and drink the water of life, clear as crystal, issuing from the throne of God.

*Secondly, LIFE IS A TIME OF PREPARATION FOR EVERY INDIVIDUAL, AND EITHER WORKS FOR HIS GOOD OR EVIL ACCORDING AS HE IS EXERCISED.*

From a consideration of the character of the Creator, we conclude, that benevolence is an essential attribute of his nature, and that his tender mercies will appear throughout all his works. The mind naturally acquiesces in the doctrine of a creating and superintending power arranging for the happiness of those whom he creates. Hence, rather than exclude this idea from their minds, the heathens adopted the opinion of good and bad deities, and the eastern nations of an evil and a good principle, sharing the government of this world. The idea, besides, is confirmed by incontrovertible evidence, for in the Bible we are assured, that God made all very good, and delighted in the work which he had produced. This world, as wheeled into space, was crowned with beauty. It was worthy of the creating hand of a benevolent being, and a suitable abode for innocence and happy creatures. Man was the lord of the creation, and his habitation afforded him every enjoyment which his heart could wish, or his imagination conceive. He himself was curiously wrought, and admirably adapted to his situation. His body was immortal and fresh in undecaying youth, health nerved his arm for action, and his body was capable of obeying every impulse of his mind. His powers and faculties were strong—his mind vigorous—his heart glowed with devotion—and innocence unsullied adorned his nature. A contemplation, therefore, of man's original state, proves the benevolence of God, and that he wishes to make his creatures happy.

Every creature is finite, and, coming perfect from the hand of God, may become imperfect from personal acts. By an act of creation God peopled heaven with finite perfect beings, but some of

them rebelled and were driven from their habitation. This was a necessary consequence, for heaven is a place of holiness, and sinful beings cannot remain within its sacred enclosure. Though sinful beings cannot dwell where God more immediately displays his glory, yet it seems, from the history of his proceedings, that fallen angels might visit sinless creatures in parts of created space. Satan, therefore, had access to the globe which we inhabit, and tempted our first parents to rebel. Hell, therefore, was the proper abode for man as a sinful creature. Generations were to descend from our first parents, and God adapted the earth to their state as a temporary residence in their journey to eternity. God revealed his plan of deliverance to them, and the earth, though under a curse, is peculiarly adapted to the present probationary state of man. He is placed in it now, under a new economy to prepare for a future existence. This globe, therefore, which Satan considered as a part of his empire, and its inhabitants as his slaves, is made the platform for the exhibition of astonishing events, under the moral government of God. By the fall, man was not only liable to punishment, but had become morally depraved. Christ by dying bore the penalty of a violated law, and thus delivered believers from punishment, and he procured the agency of the Spirit to create the heart anew, and thus restored the divine image which was lost by sin. The deliverance from punishment which Christ effected for believers is an act, and is called justification; the renewing of the heart is a work, and is called sanctification. The latter being progressive, though an act of grace, is accomplished by means.

Life to Christians frequently is a checkered scene, and at every remarkable stage of their pilgrimage to eternity, fresh proofs of an unseen directing power are furnished. They are often led by a way which they know not, and conducted to an issue which they did not anticipate. Ordinary occurrences are much under our own control, and by certain modes of action we can, in not a few cases, predict the result. Circumstances, however,

which we did not foresee, and which, from our ignorance of the cause, we term accidents, give new directions to our plans, and change in a greater or less degree the aspect of our personal history. The meeting of a friend, the death of a relation, or a single word dropped in conversation, may be connected with a course of events which may either embitter or gladden our future existence. Situations of importance may excite to activity minds which otherwise would have corroded with ennui, repined in solitude, or been frittered away on trifles. Individual and general good may result from such overruling dispensations. Minds of the strongest grasp and finest mould may be wasted in uncongenial pursuits, but while God's ends are not frustrated by such an arrangement, the individuals so circumstanced are kept in a state of preparation. Prosperity engenders pride, and adversity balances, in some minds, the actuating powers. A sickly existence may preserve the soul in health. Bereavements loosen the heart from created objects. All works for the good of the Christian, and the fluctuations to which he is exposed prepare his mind for the spiritual employments of heaven.

Every individual in future will be rewarded according to his works. As we sow, so shall we reap. He that sows sparingly shall reap also sparingly. Among the angelic host there are various degrees, and though all are happy in heaven, the capacity for enjoyment is infinitely varied. As vessels all are full to overflowing, but all cannot partake of the same extent of enjoyment. In the joy of our Lord as we have employed our talents, so will be the measure of our reward. This peculiarity in heaven's jurisprudence is too much overlooked by Christians in their preparation for eternity. Heaven is spoken of by us in general terms, and the godly ambition recommended in the Scriptures escapes our notice. We endure no ordinary struggle, and submit to most unpleasant preparation to gain our wishes in this world. The temporal object is seen, and stimulates us to continued exertion. Spiritual things, though superlatively important,

from the medium through which they are viewed, make a weak impression on our minds. Our heavenly Father, therefore, brings us more closely in contact with the things which belong to our peace, by preparation often perplexing, and generally unpleasant. We prefer present enjoyment to future happiness, and by a process of training suited to our case, our heavenly Father bends our stubborn minds, that the future may not be neglected in the engrossing anxieties of the present. Hence, the trials which we suppose calculated to bring our gray hairs with sorrow to the grave, are the divinely appointed means of ripening us for glory. The moral culture which we are receiving is necessary, that we may grow, flourish, and bloom for ever in the paradise of God.

Tired of the vexations of life and an unspiritualizing world, we are apt to exclaim, "O that we had wings like a dove, that we might flee hence and be at rest." This wish is improper, for the mental state which has urged us to embody such feelings, shows that we are not fully resigned to God's way in preparing us for heaven. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." Heaven is rest from pain and every afflicting feeling, but it is not a state of inactivity. The capabilities of mind acquired in a probationary state are kept there in active play without any disturbing force. The wonders of creation, the intricacies of Providence, the varied sublimities of redemption, with a consideration of the past, present, and future, open to them endless fields of inquiry, in which they can expatiate with rapture. The higher, therefore, the tone of spirituality acquired in the even of preparation, the more exalted the enjoyment during an endless heavenly Sabbath. Here Saturday well spent prepares the mind for the exercises and enjoyment of a coming Sabbath. There the activities of the even of preparation are exchanged for employments adapted to every mind, and the more refined and capacious the energies, the higher the range of wonders unfolded, the more ravishing the enjoyment and

ecstatic the praise. Here the Sabbath is intended for bodily rest and spiritual refreshment; there the weary pilgrim finds repose from distracting cares, the malice of an evil world, and the perversity of a wicked heart; there blooms the tree of life—is found the hidden manna—rivers of pleasure which gladden the city of our God—society—the most estimable employments—congenial joy, without a wish or a fear of its termination.

The conduct of a parent towards his family exemplifies the system of moral training to which God here subjects his own people to prepare them for the exercises of heaven. Children wish to enjoy the present, and see the future only through the imagination. The restraints under which they are placed, and the punishments which they endure, are seldom imputed to the real motives. The parent who does his duty anticipates futurity, and prepares his children to be useful members of society by mental training. It is unpleasant to check the lively buoyancy of youth, and force the unwilling mind to labour. If he is directed by feeling, he may spoil his children by indulgence, and incur their blame in after years; but if he is guided by right principles, he will train them for the sphere of life in which they are most probably destined to act. His children and he therefore have different ends in view with present time. His children wish it for enjoyment, and the wise parent wishes it to be employed in preparing for active life. The wish of the one not unfrequently will oppose that of the other, and authority must interfere to gain the desired end. The parent may have to struggle with the finest feelings of our nature in enforcing obedience when correction is necessary, and from affection to his child, and for his future welfare, he may subject him to severe chastisement. Is the loving parent at this time devoid of feeling when he puts his child to necessary pain for future benefit? We appeal to every judicious parent before us, if chastisement is not resorted to for future advantage. This consideration overcomes the quiverings of nature, and with excited

feelings, and even the tear starting in the eye, the parent causes grief to his child from the purest motives. And is there such a plan of sensibility in a parent's heart in chastising his offspring, and will not our heavenly Father have, towards his own whom he afflicts, the overflowings of parental love. God is perfect in his nature, and no impulse of feeling will make him withdraw that stroke which is to improve the heart. The grief which he causes has a direct connexion with the glory of a better state of being. Whom he loves he chastens; and though his mode of culture be unpleasant to nature, yet knowing the end he has in view, the language of faith is, "It is the Lord, let him do what seems good in his sight."

It has been supposed, that the kindness of God would be more manifest to our race, were there no sorrow in the world. This supposition originates in a mistake. There was a time when affliction did not depress the mind of man, but sin has entirely altered his moral constitution, and he has to be treated according to his circumstances. Were there no grief, there would be no sin, and were there no sin, the present race of beings would require to be swept from the face of the globe. This is not the result wanted by the objector, for he supposes the present state of things to exist, and wishes complete happiness to be connected with a sinful state. In other words he wishes an impossibility. He wishes God not to train man for immortality in the way best adapted to his nature. God trains for heaven by affliction; and the objector wishes the result without the means, happiness without the unpleasant moral training.

Were Satan's power annihilated, and man's heart changed, then grief could not exist. This is just what God has in view by his system of moral training, and, to wish such an end, under the present state of things, is not only to complain of God's way in leading his own to heaven, but argues a desire for enjoyment without the necessary preparation. What important end can be gained without labour, privation, and patience? and is

this earth to be heaven, while it is only in the nature of things preparatory for that state? Could the possibilities be realized to which we have adverted, would it be kindness in God to grant a state of things in this world directly opposite to the preparation required for heaven. Were there no misery in this world, would we not easily forget the world to come. Were all happy here, would we sigh for the happiness of futurity. How would our sanctification be promoted, were our minds not impressed with the evil of sin? Where would be the compassion to lull us into a sleep profound, and not to disturb our repose, till the terrors of futurity burst on our astonished view? Such a state of things would be most destructive to man, and dishonouring to God. In fact, it would merely be an act of forbearance. Were we allowed to dwell in paradise, or rather in this world such as Eden was, and at a certain period, without one previous pang, allowed calmly to retire from it into a state for which we were unprepared, O! where would be the goodness of God in this act of forbearance? Is it not the meltings of compassion to warn us of coming danger! Is he not the friend who snatches us from imminent danger, though in the act of doing so he causes momentary anguish? And is it not from fatherly affection that God sends afflictions to stop abounding iniquity, and to prepare his own for that place where sorrow and sighing are unknown? When Jacob saw the end God had in view by his trials, he found that he should not have said, "all these things are against me." Job remembered, with satisfaction, his trials, and was satisfied that the Lord is compassionate. David suffered much, but frankly confessed that it was "good for him to be afflicted." Christ was made perfect through sufferings, and all works for good to those who are the called according to God's purpose.

The inhabitants of the globe are divided into two great portions—the children of God, and the children of the devil. Those who are under the power of Satan may not, in every case, require the interference of God. For wise and inscrutable pur-

poses he may let them alone, and may reserve the developement of strict justice to another world. Hence, a vast number of irreligious men are allowed to prosper, but in the secret counsels of God, they may be fattening for the day of slaughter, and preparing for an awful reckoning. Their minds may be of that nature that affliction would not profit, and God overrules their prosperity to answer his plans of moral government. He has compassion for them, and does not take the enjoyment from them which would not individually profit, and which they may enjoy, and his moral government be secured. Some among the irreligious, however, who follow wickedness with greediness, require to be checked in their course; and though in their case no salutary effect follows, yet, by their trials, they may be reminded that God abhors evil, and these may be of that nature which arise directly from sins committed, and may lead the minds of many, by the training under which they are placed, to think of God and on eternity.

Towards the wicked for whom God has designs of mercy, afflictions not only exemplify his abhorrence of sin, but are a direct preparation for a beneficial change. These are means of grace through which the Spirit operates and produces new principles of action. Some minds cannot enjoy prosperity without forgetting God, and it is to them actually a curse. Their cup overflows, and they quaff with pleasure the honied draught, and amidst creature enjoyments forget the Creator. God feels for the wanderings of such, and though they have no compassion for themselves, He sends trials that he may prepare them to consider their ways. Unforeseen events may occur, and one unexpected disaster after another may destroy the pride of life and bring haughty looks low. Plans may be disconcerted, and mental anxiety be produced, which may convince them that vanity and vexation of spirit are connected with every created object.

Around the table like olive plants a healthy family may be reared; but disease may wither hopes, and foreboding fears may mar the enjoyment of the domestic

circle. The soul may be bound up in the pledges of love, and death may mock the sympathies of the heart, and convert the sweets of home into gall and wormwood. Plenty may extend her hand, and the noise of revelry invite to the social board, but disease may have cloyed the appetite, the blood may flow in rapid speed, or sluggishly move in its channels, and the sick room and the nurse be the abode and the friend. God knows the state of every mind, and when he afflicts, that his training may end in a salutary change, the visitation is adapted to the mind, and to the result to be produced. How many thousands can date serious impressions from the causes we have specified; and, is not this proof conclusive, that times of preparation are seasons of trial? O! it is painful to nature to mourn over a fortune ruined, to shed the tear of bereavement, and to droop under disease, and linger out a sickly existence; but if the heart is improved, how great the kindness of Him who visited thus for beneficial purposes. The depression of the mind has been the blessed means under grace of changing the heart. The temporal loss has been spiritual gain. The riches which flew away like an eagle towards heaven, have been exchanged for durable riches, the treasures of heaven. The family circle has been lessened; but a portion better than sons and daughters has been given. Sickness has mantled the world in sackcloth, and embittered the cup of enjoyment; but glory is seen in distant prospective, and a new relish acquired; the soul hungering and thirsting after righteousness is filled. God, therefore, by seasons of trial, in many cases promotes spiritual welfare, and by an even of preparation, leads from sin to holiness, and from misery to happiness.

We now shortly address those who are not preparing to meet God. For the wicked life is an even of preparation; but not the harbinger of a coming Sabbath. Anticipate, we beseech you, the grave, and remember that as the tree falls, so it must for ever lie. Think on the solemnities of a judgment day, and with an accusing conscience from among the assembled

family of Adam, listen to a sentence which cannot be repealed, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Life is the season of preparation, and death is the avenue leading to eternity. As the joys of heaven are proportioned, so are the punishments of the wicked. Some receive few stripes, and others are beaten with many stripes. There is a worm to gnaw, and a fire to devour. If even the indifferent endure the second death, what will be the portion of those who live in the concealed or open violation of God's commandments. The moral government of God will be as fully developed in another world in proportioning punishments as distributing rewards. His detestation of sin will then be manifest, and the frown of incensed deity will be the more awful as the mind is morally degraded. If the nations who forget God shall be turned into hell, what is meant by "wo unto you hypocrites," and the sorer punishment of those who trample under foot the Son of God? With hearts as varied as the human countenance, so will be the different capacities of the wicked for enduring suffering. Living to the flesh you will reap corruption, and as the quantity of seed sown, so will be your harvest. Sowing to the wind you will reap the whirlwind. Drudging in Satan's service you will not lose your reward. Were your state fixed we would not add to your wretchedness by advertising to it; but you may yet escape impending danger, and by fleeing from the wrath to come lay hold on eternal life. By such appeals we imitate the compassion of our Saviour, and the tenderness of his apostles, who urged sinners by coming wrath to be reconciled to God. This is your day of preparation, and a lifetime is short enough to prepare for heaven, and if the righteous scarcely are saved, where shall you appear? If such things happen in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? You will repent, you suppose; but in the act of procrastination you miscalculate most egregiously. The labourer was accepted in the eleventh hour, who never before was called to enter the vineyard; but you

repeatedly have been called, and as often have successfully resisted. From one solitary instance recorded in the Bible, will you reason on the possibility of salvation at a dying hour? Granting that you have made a covenant with death for a specified period, is the interval of grace to be abused, and is any other period of your life so much adapted for repentance as the present? In the case of Felix, did present trembling resisted lead to a change of life, or did the convictions of the stony-ground hearers end in conversion, and will your present resistance not increase your insensibilities, and do you not convert life, actually, into a curse by preparing your minds for enlarged capacity of suffering? You are moving onwards in a state of moral degradation, and escaping from the ordinary means of conversion, you are rapidly assimilating to the mental condition of your future associates. Your pulse yet throbs, and yet there is hope. The angel has not lifted his hand to swear that time shall be no longer. The present movement of your mind may be the strivings of the Spirit. Cherish convictions. Grace is omnipotent. Mercy is boundless. The blood of Christ cleanses from all sin, and a Zoar of safety is prepared for you from impending wrath, into which enter and be safe, and the Sun of righteousness shall shine on you and direct your feet to everlasting habitations. Amen.

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THE PIOUS FAMILY.

Soon after the surrender of Copenhagen to the English in the year 1807, detachments of soldiers were for a time stationed in the surrounding villages. It happened one day that three soldiers, belonging to a Highland regiment, were sent to forage among the neighbouring farm-houses. They went to several, but found them stripped and deserted. At length they came to a large garden, or orchard, full of apple trees, bending under the weight of fruit. They entered by a gate, and followed a path which brought

them to a neat farm-house. Every thing without bespoke quietness and security; but as they entered by the front door, the mistress of the house and her children ran screaming out at the back. The interior of the house presented an appearance of order and comfort superior to what might be expected from people in that station, and from the habits of the country. A watch hung by the side of the fire-place, and a neat book-case, well filled, attracted the attention of the elder soldier. He took down a book: it was written in a language unknown to him, but the name of Jesus Christ was legible on every page. At this moment the master of the house entered by the door through which his wife and children had just fled. One of the soldiers, by threatening signs, demanded provisions; the man stood firm and undaunted, but shook his head. The soldier who held the book approached him, and pointing to the name of Jesus Christ, laid his hand upon his heart, and looked up to heaven. Instantly the farmer grasped his hand, shook it vehemently, and then ran out of the room. He soon returned with his wife and children, laden with milk, eggs, bacon, &c. which were freely tendered; and when money was offered in return, it was at first refused. But as two of the soldiers were pious men, they, much to the chagrin of their companion, (who swore grievously he would never forage with them again,) insisted upon paying for all they took. When taking leave, the pious soldiers intimated to the farmer, that it would be well for him to secrete his watch; but, by most significant signs, he gave them to understand, that he feared no evil, for his trust was in God; and that though his neighbours, on the right hand and on the left, had fled from their habitation, and, by foraging parties, had lost what they could not remove, not a hair of his head had been injured, nor had he even lost an apple from his trees. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them."

## SERMON XXXIX.

### THE VANITY OF PLEASURE.

BY THE REV. JOHN STYLES, D.D.

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*“I said to my heart, Go to, now, enjoy pleasure; I will prove thee with mirth: but, behold, this also is vanity.”—Ecc. ii. 1.*

How happy should we be could we profit by the experience of others. If the lessons of wisdom were obeyed at the commencement of life, there would be neither vanity nor vexation of spirit in the world. But instead of deriving advantage from the instructions of those who have gone before them, every new generation is resolved to think and act for themselves, and to rush into scenes of folly and wretchedness, with a temerity which nothing ought to excuse but utter and unavoidable ignorance. In nothing is this more evident than in the eagerness with which the sinful gratifications and amusements of the world are pursued, as the chief good of the soul. In spite of this testimony of the wisest of men, and which is rendered awfully impressive by that wreck of character and happiness which he sustained in the pursuit of sensual delight, there is not an individual who, at some period of his life, does not say to his heart, “Go to, now, enjoy pleasure; I will prove thee with mirth:” nor is there one amidst the vast multitude who try this experiment, that is not forced at last to confess, “This also is vanity.”

In calling your attention to these words of the preacher, my intention is, to set before you the vanity of all pleasure which is derived from this world, and which centres in it; and my view will be particularly directed to the subject of amusements, in the pursuit of which, many waste their whole mortal existence; and others mar the consistency of religious character, and retard their progress in the

way to heaven. In prosecuting this design, let us

I. CONSIDER THE CASE OF THOSE WHO PROPOSE TO THEMSELVES NO HIGHER END OF EXISTENCE THAN THE ENJOYMENT OF WORLDLY PLEASURE.

II. OF THOSE WHO, WHILE THEY PROFESS TO BE GOVERNED BY THE PRINCIPLES AND PROSPECTS OF RELIGION, SEEK RECREATION AND DIVERSION IN FASHIONABLE AND PREVALENT AMUSEMENTS.

III. THE GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THOSE AMUSEMENTS, AND THE DEGREE IN WHICH THEY MAY BE SOUGHT, WHICH ARE INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE DIGNITY AND HAPPINESS OF MAN, AS A RATIONAL AND IMMORTAL BEING.

I. IN THE FIRST PLACE, THEN, LET US CONSIDER THE CASE OF THOSE WHO PROPOSE TO THEMSELVES NO HIGHER END OF EXISTENCE THAN THE ENJOYMENT OF WORLDLY PLEASURE.

If, in this description, I embrace not only the gay and trifling, but the more sober and serious part of mankind, who are engaged in various avocations; the busy throng who have scarcely a moment's leisure, but who consider the present as the only sphere of their existence and enjoyment, this branch of my subject would comprehend a vast proportion of the human race. But I would confine my attention to the idle and dissipated; to those whose business is amusement—who consider every day lost that is not spent in folly, and who torture invention to furnish expedients for carnal delights.

These form a very numerous class of our fellow creatures; and I know not how to submit their case to your notice, without blushing for human nature, and strongly resenting the vile indignity which is thus offered to our noblest faculties and immortal hopes.

Every man is a traitor to his order and kind in the creation, who avows principles, or pursues a conduct unworthy of his high destination as an heir of immortality. Whatever would confine the human existence within the narrow limits of the tomb; whatever would render the present state infinitely important, and annihilate the future, ought to excite the just and generous indignation of all who have any remembrance of their divine original, or any breathings of their ancient hope. To choose the pleasures of this world as our highest good; as the only, or even the chief allotment of humanity, is debasing to a rational nature, subversive of all virtuous feelings and sentiments, and certainly destructive of present as well as future happiness.

1. It is most debasing to a rational nature, whose distinguishing properties are understanding, volition, and immortality. The two former ought always to maintain a chief and ultimate reference to the latter. The understanding should be employed in obtaining just and sublime ideas of the character of God; in seeking after and treasuring up refined and spiritual truths, which constitute the riches of a soul whose destiny is to dwell for ever in regions where such truths will be its principal aliment. The *will* should be directed to those preferences and vigorous exertions, which render the earth insignificant, and by which the spirit is disenthralled from sublunary attraction, and carried upwards to the reflection of angels and the vision of God. The thoughts, the aspirations, and all the energies of an immortal being ought, assuredly, to bear the impress of immortality, and to manifest whither we are tending, and what we consider to be the true glory of our nature. Whatever grandeur may mark the conceptions of a mind that is contented with a mortal and earthly range; whatever

achievements of heroism and magnanimity may shed almost divine lustre on a character which belongs only to the empire of time; they sink into nothing when viewed in the light of eternity,—they do not lift the soul to heaven. In their motives and consequences, they have no connexion with an unfading, incorruptible inheritance. They are designed for no more than a little sphere, and the admiration of a world which passeth away.

If this be true of the loftiest imaginations of man, and of his noblest performances, when he thinks and acts without any reference to a future life—infinity debasing must be the pursuit of sensual indulgencies. He who lives for such enjoyments as these sinks in the scale of existence, and is debased to a degree below simple brutality. Mere animals obey the impulse of their nature, and answer the design for which they were created. But the sensualist calls away his divinely attempered spirit from the society of angels and communion with God, and constrains it to be a purveyor and a vassal to a piece of animated clay, a body of corruption and death. Instead of holy meditation, and devout ascriptions of praise to the Infinite Being—instead of expanding her faculties by an intimate converse with all that is great, and good, and fair in the universe, she is doomed to reflect on scenes where she assisted appetite in his sensual feast, to encumber herself with impure and grovelling thoughts, and so to associate with flesh and base material things, that “she grows clotted by contagion;” imbodifies and imbrutes till she quite lose the divine property of her first being.

2. But while this devotedness to worldly pleasure is thus debasing to our rational nature, it is equally subversive of all virtuous feelings and sentiments. It not only degrades the intellect,—it pollutes the heart.

Virtue has no adequate foundation but in the knowledge and belief of a Deity. It must derive its principles from thence; and these principles must be cherished and strengthened by motives drawn from

immortality. The basis of virtue must be piety; the resources, the consolations, the rewards of piety, are in a future life. Whatever disqualifies us for the contemplation of God, of heaven, and eternity, obliterates the moral sense, and gives us up entirely to the dominion of our passions and appetites. The pleasures of the world, its insnaring vanities, have, more than any thing besides, this fatal influence. When once they take possession of the heart, they alienate our thoughts from God, and weaken the impression which a belief of his being, perfections, and government would otherwise produce; they deaden the repulses of conscience, and obscure the light of reason. They cherish the sensual part of our nature till it rises so far above the rational, as to cast a dark shadow over it. The consequence is, that we call evil good, and good evil; and wander so far from truth and righteousness, that we lose all sense of our degradation, "nor once perceive our foul disfigurement." Worldly pleasures render us strangely selfish, and thus unfit us for society. Every social and domestic tie is broken asunder when it stands in the way of imperious lust. Benevolence has no place in a heart devoted to its own gratification; and that part of virtue which imposes restraint and self-denial, which demands sacrifice and pain, is wholly disregarded. The votaries of pleasure are impatient of all control. Every feeling must be indulged; every suggestion of appetite and passion obeyed. The present only is considered, and the future kept entirely out of sight. Their maxim is, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

The man of pleasure, then, is at the farthest possible remove from real greatness. As an intellectual being, he is vain and superficial, in raptures with the merest trifles, and petulant under the slightest disappointments; as a member of the community, he is frothy, frivolous, and the common enemy of his kind; he receives benefits, but returns ingratitude; he lives not for others, nor for himself, as an accountable and immortal creature; he has no birthright beyond the grave.

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All his thoughts and wishes, hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, centre here. He is akin to earth, and has voluntarily renounced his inheritance in heaven. All this is implied in their case who propose to themselves no higher end of existence than the enjoyment of pleasure: and what has this pleasure to bestow?

That which is purchased with so great a sacrifice of all that is dignifying in human nature, ought surely to possess great immediate advantages, and at least to afford, during the present life, uninterrupted and exquisite enjoyment.

3. But let those who indulge such an expectation know that this also is vanity. Those who invert the order of their being, and confine all their happiness to earth, can never be happy long. Their felicity, while enjoyed, is not the calm serenity and holy delight of an ethereal mind; but the turbid, violent effervescence of the senses, wrought up to delirium. Every repetition lessens the charm; yet so eager is the votary of pleasure to procure to himself gratification, that he is not contented to take enjoyments in their natural course, but with a guilty and thoughtless infatuation, greedily swallows, at a single draught, the pleasures of a life, drains the world of its last drop, and then wonders that he is miserable. How many, in the very morning of their days, have thus devoured all their pleasures; how many, surrounded with all the sources of enjoyment, which, for a little time afforded them exquisite delight, now feel

"The fulness of satiety."

The most dissipated men are the first to complain of the dulness and sameness of the pleasures they pursue. In illustration of this remark, I scarcely am acquainted with a book of more melancholy interest than a well known work of a noble author; now, alas, no more! a man of genius, who, possessing the opportunity of exhausting the world of its pleasures, availed himself of it; and who, in the poem alluded to, has given us the result of his experience—his estimate of man in his best earthly estate:—

"And dost thou ask what secret wo  
I bear, corroding joy and youth ;  
And wilt thou vainly seek to know  
A pang, e'en thou must fail to soothe ?

It is not love, it is not hate,  
Nor low ambition's honour lost,  
That bids me loathe my present state,  
And fly from all I prized the most ;  
It is that weariness which springs  
From all I meet, or hear, or see.

It is that settled, ceaseless gloom,  
The fabled Hebrew wanderer bore,  
That will not look beyond the tomb,  
But cannot hope for rest before.

What exile from himself can flee ?  
To zones, though more and more remote,  
Still, still pursues, where'er I be,  
The blight of life, the demon thought.

Through many a clime 'tis mine to go,  
With many a retrospection curst,  
And all my solace is to know,  
Whate'er betides, I've known the worst.  
What is that worst? nay, do not ask,  
In pity from the search forbear ;  
Smile on, nor venture to unmask  
Man's heart, and view the *hell* that's there."

Are these the triumphs of dissipation ?  
Is this all that remains to him who  
chooses earth for his portion, and will  
not look beyond the tomb ?

This also is vanity.

But even were not sensuality so nearly  
allied to despair ; and could its joys  
accompany us to the very grave, my  
brethren, it would then be vanity. What  
is life, though every moment should be a  
moment of transport ? Can any thing be  
more fleeting ? And to make this the  
whole of man, as they virtually do who  
look for happiness no higher than the  
earth, and no farther than the grave, is to  
reduce our existence to a mere shadow—  
a semblance of being. If there be no  
after state, then mankind rather *seem*  
to be than are. In a moment, they are and  
are not ;—I know not when to say I have  
seen a man. It seems as if there were  
some such things before my eyes ; I per-  
suade myself that I see them walk to and  
fro, that I talk and converse with them ;  
but instantly my own sense is ready to  
give my sense the lie. I am but mocked  
with a figment, an airy show ; and what

seemed a reality proves an imposture.  
How vain, then, is the happiness which  
belongs exclusively to such a state as  
this ! who can be satisfied with a felicity  
so momentary and unsubstantial ? O, ye  
puppets of an empty show ; ye figures of  
a useless series ; ye moving dust and  
ashes, dead to virtue, and furious with  
appetite, proceed to your glorious desti-  
nation ; eat, drink, sleep, and perish !  
But perhaps bitter sarcasm little becomes  
this sacred place ; and folly, whose ter-  
mination is so dreadful, ought to excite  
pity rather than disdain. Pursuing  
pleasure as the only end of a rational  
existence, is not only accompanied with  
disappointment here, but is followed by  
the loss of heaven, and eternal banish-  
ment from the Divine presence and hap-  
piness. Those who live without God—  
who seek an end infinitely below him,  
shall never rise to the enjoyment of him  
in glory. They must be covered with  
shame and everlasting contempt. Yes,  
ye lovers of pleasure, your vain pursuits  
must soon terminate—your joys vanish—  
while you must lie down in eternal  
darkness. I turn from you to

II. CONSIDER THE CASE OF THOSE  
WHOSE SITUATION IS EQUALLY DANGER-  
OUS WITH YOURS—WHOSE GUILT IS EVEN  
MORE AGGRAVATED—I MEAN SUCH AS  
PROFESS TO BE GOVERNED BY THE PRIN-  
CIPLES AND PROSPECTS OF RELIGION, AND  
HABITUALLY SEEK RECREATION AND DI-  
VERSION IN FASHIONABLE AND PREVALENT  
AMUSEMENTS. In order to justify what  
may appear, on a superficial view, a harsh  
and unreasonable conclusion, let us, for a  
few moments, particularize these amuse-  
ments, and investigate their nature. I  
hope I shall not be understood as sus-  
pending men's eternal destiny on their  
amusements simply, and as consigning  
them to eternal destruction because of  
these ; but I exhibit them as implying a  
state of mind and heart in those who  
relish and pursue them, utterly incompa-  
tible with salvation.

Recreation and diversion, considered in  
themselves, are not only lawful, they are  
necessary. When there is no reason  
against any social, or, indeed, any other

pleasure, there is always a reason for it, namely, that it is pleasure. To suppose that the Deity would abridge us of any pleasure, merely as such, when it does not interfere with higher and nobler delights, is a notion highly derogatory to his goodness; who, in forming this world, seems, in some things, to have consulted our pleasure only, without any other apparent end in view.

I have said that recreation is necessary. Every person, even the meanest in society, ought to enjoy the privilege of some leisure time; and the employment of this is usually a fair and certain test of character. If, as a Christian, I feel tender concern for the happiness of a friend, I shall observe him in his leisure hours. It will give me pain to find him then a loitering trifler; nor will it much relieve me to discover that, in such seasons, he is constantly engaged in the pursuits of curious speculation, or in the gratification and improvement of an elegant taste. In such a case, I must remind him that there are more serious concerns; I must counsel him to seek for pleasures more solid and sublime. But what if my friend is seized with the madness of the times, and hurried into the whirlpool of fashionable amusements! Ah! now the chaos of his darkened mind is agitated; now there is no access for sober reflections: I must stand afar off, with the feelings of one who beholds from the shore, incapable of affording relief, a distant shipwreck;—only, I remember that the things which are impossible with men are possible with God. Can it be denied, that the lawless, dissipated state of mind which pervades assemblies for vain amusements, is attended with total presumptuous aversion to the influence of the Holy Spirit of God.

Let us view those amusements which originate among the dissipated, the frivolous, and the vicious. The delight they afford is strictly worldly, as opposed to every thing that has relation to a future state of being.

Some of them are injurious, as they infringe upon sacred time; others are directly levelled at the very principles and spirit of Christianity; and others are

simply ridiculous, or useless, and are to be condemned, as they are a sinful waste of hours which ought to be devoted to far other purposes.

The first of these, namely, those which supersede attendance on the public and private duties of religion, which profane the Sabbath, and call off the mind from the solemn realities of eternity, are among the most dangerous snares to innocence; and though in themselves they do not violate any command of heaven, are yet, in a heinous degree, sinful, because they strike at the sanctity of that day which God has peculiarly consecrated to his own glory. Sunday promenades, and Sunday concerts, I would hope, are things ever strange to the ears of a Christian audience. It surely cannot be, that persons who profess to reverence the commands of God; who solemnly believe that they ought to remember the Sabbath-day, and to keep it holy, can thus openly defy all moral consistency, and trample on the very palladium of that religion which they would not be thought to have renounced. Among those amusements which are directly, and in their own nature, opposed to the principles and spirit of Christianity, we may place *gaming*, under all its various forms and degrees; the theatre, public balls, fashionable routs, cruel sports, and promiscuous indiscriminate reading.

Surely no Christian can have the effrontery to stand forward as the apologist of *gaming*. It requires no high degree of common virtue, not to say evangelical purity, to induce every person of reflection to denounce it as greatly immoral, as well as irreligious. Every thing that approaches to such a detestable vice, or that familiarizes the principle to the rising generation, ought to be avoided as one would avoid the pestilence. The circle of a gaming-table, whether in the regions of dark seclusion, among the banditti who perform in silent fear their nocturnal orgies to the god of play, or in more lightsome and gay receptacles of the idle and the foolish of both sexes, ought to be shunned as a traveller would fly from the poison tree of Java.

At least, parents who introduce their

children to such scenes ought, in courtesy, and for consistency's sake, to put off their Christianity; to make a specific avowal that they have neither part nor lot in the Son of Jesse, and that they wish their families to be for ever alienated from the church. I shall, perhaps, be asked whether I include cards in this general proscription, or they may be used without any immediate approach to the vice which I reprobate. To this I would reply that, though harmless in themselves, and as they are sometimes used, yet, as they are seldom employed except in the service of gaming, their character is at least equivocal, and, therefore, a Christian had better never admit them into the number of his recreations. Things innocent in their own nature are often made dangerous by their accompaniments;—and it has been judiciously observed, that “the atmosphere of a card-table is one in which religious principles will droop, and wither, and die. We cannot remove any thing from its peculiar element, without subjecting it to another, and a deleterious element. On this account, there are more persons ruined by those pleasures which are pronounced innocent, than by those styled guilty.”

The *theatre* is the very school of the world, where it inculcates its principles, and enforces its maxims, aided by every thing that can captivate the imagination and interest the depraved heart. This is perhaps the most subtle and decided enemy of religion, and commits dreadful ravages among the youth of a great and populous city. Contrast—for it is impossible to compare—the spirit of the stage with the spirit of the gospel. The one is all levity, giddiness, and folly; the other sober, calm, and wise. The exerting influence of the gospel is to raise those thoughts, sentiments, and affections which promote the true dignity of man, and secure his best and eternal interests. Thus it leads to devout and holy reflections on the character of God; it leads us to choose virtue, to reject vice; it inspires in one sex the love of peace, in the other the love of modesty. It subdues, and promises, finally, to eradicate, all the evil that is in human passions; to render

feeling subservient to reason, and reason obedient to revelation. The stage, on the contrary, violates the dignity of the Most High, by taking his name in vain, by scoffing at his laws, and by impugning his authority. It dethrones the true God, and sets up an idol in his place; it makes virtue and vice convertible terms; it cherishes all the irascible and malignant passions; it is the very hot-bed of sensuality; it fixes on one or two amiable qualities which cannot be considered as virtues to atone for a thousand follies and a thousand crimes; it applauds those qualities only which a man may possess while he is utterly destitute of religion; and others it commends, which he ought not, which he cannot possess, if he be a real Christian. In fine, to adopt the language of a writer already quoted, “the stage is the puppet-show of life, the school of vice, the vortex of debauchery, the stronghold of the god of this world, the vestibule of destruction.” In other worldly amusements, something is preserved in deference to the claims of innocence and modesty; but in this there is the least possible proportion of good, with the greatest possible amount of evil. Snares are laid for the eye, the ear, the imagination, and the heart; the company, the spectators, the music, the sentiments, have all a simultaneous tendency; they seek to throw down the mounds of virtue, and to lay waste the excellencies of human character. *Public balls*, and *fashionable routs*, are anti-christian on account of the intercourse which must be maintained with persons of light character and no religion; on account of their influence in raising and inflaming the passions: nor can any thing be described more opposite to the spirit of Christianity; more incompatible with the duties which it requires, and the domestic order which is essential to a consistent profession of it, than midnight parties, where time and health are miserably wasted without the slightest compensation in return. There is no tyrant more capricious, and, at the same time, more cruel, than fashion: her votaries are slaves, and slaves of the most pitiable description; whether we consider what they are forced to renounce, or com-

pelled to endure, it is certain that they must abandon religion, and all interest in a future world. The road to the kingdom of heaven lies not through the saloon of midnight frivolity and dissipation. There is the enchanted ground, where those who wander lose their way and return no more.

I have mentioned cruel sports as derogatory to the Christian character; but, indeed, my brethren, they depose humanity; they not only argue hardness of heart, and contempt of God's word and commandment, but they place us far below the unhappy creatures we torture for our amusement: in those cases, the brutes rise in the scale of being, and take precedence of their dastardly tormentors. For, O,

"The Being that is in the clouds and air,  
That is in the green leaves among the groves,  
Maintains a deep and reverential care  
For the unoffending creatures whom he  
loves;"

while the creation groans, being burdened with the cruelties and crimes of man, happy are they who learn and practice this simple lesson:

"Never to blend their pleasure or their pride  
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels."

By *promiscuous* and *indiscriminate* reading, I refer more particularly to those works of fiction which are made to supersede productions of a nobler character, which are both designed and adapted for our instruction in useful knowledge. Very few, indeed, have leisure to read exclusively for amusement; and those who imagine that they can be simply amused by books which interest the feelings and excite the passions, are egregiously mistaken. Reading is either useful or injurious. The reading of young persons, especially when they choose their own authors, and follow their own inclinations rather than the guidance of judicious preceptors, will form their character; and if their choice should fall, as it too frequently does, upon the novels and romances which are popular, they will only surcharge their minds with prejudices and their hearts with folly.

Without dwelling on the undue excitement which this kind of reading produces,

and the false impressions and views which it gives of life, I must denounce its immoral tendency. Of course I am perfectly aware of a few splendid exceptions; yet is the charge, though a most serious one, I fear to be applied to nearly all the books which pass under the name of novels. In making this assertion, however, I am taking the New Testament as the standard of morality; and by this standard, although there will be no comparison in the shades of guilt, few will escape condemnation. The following appeal from a work already quoted, is appropriate and irresistible.

"What are we to say of works which fritter away the distinctions between right and wrong, and deceive the unwary into the paths of vice, by surrounding them with the waymarks of virtue; what are we to say of works which treat with contempt those admirable qualities, industry, frugality, and prudence, while they lavish their praises on extravagance, carelessness, and folly? What are we to say of works which alienate the heart from domestic and retired duties; which convert every quiet home into a prison-house, and make the best of parents appear either ridiculous or tyrannical? What are we to say of works which are polluted by vivid descriptions of sensual pleasures, lascivious innuendos, and infidel *bon mots*; and which almost uniformly make love a passion wholly irresistible? What are we to say of works which justify pride, vanity, revenge, ambition, and hatred; which, in some cases, become the apologists of inebriety, impurity, adultery, gambling, duelling, swearing, lying, and suicide? It is no atonement for those writers, that they occasionally throw out some good moral sentiments; that they *satirize* certain vices which are unfashionable; and that they sometimes make the catastrophe speak on the side of virtue. When one vice is condemned to patronise another; when a moral maxim is pinned on to a licentious picture; when a fable composed of intrigue and wickedness terminates in a cold allusion to virtue, virtue and morality are only scandalized and betrayed; they are only made a slight covering to the pitfalls of vice."

After this statement—and I appeal to fact and observation to confirm the truth of it—will it be contended that these are amusements in which Christians can lawfully indulge? To feel pleasure in them,—particularly to desire them, and not to be disgusted with them after a little observation and experience, is to betray a state of heart exceedingly uncongenial with spiritual religion.

It indicates ignorance of the *nature of Christianity*. But if Christianity be professed, and under its stricter forms, then does it betray great and lamentable inconsistency, or deliberate and conscious hypocrisy.

The good fight of faith is a warfare maintained by the Christian spirit and principles, with the principles and spirit of the world. As the man of the world lives without any reference to heaven, without any relish for its joys, the Christian is bound to live in a manner worthy of so high and glorious an expectation, and to derive his satisfactions from so blessed a hope. Whatever distinguishes the worldling, he should avoid, and should be, as far as possible, the reverse of it. Contentedly to associate with him, in his vain follies and amusements, is to betray our cause into his hands—to grant a victory to our enemy.

The attempt to unite religion and the world is vain; the expectation of happiness in such a corner is likewise vain,—while misery must be at the end of it.

It is always, says Mrs. Hannah More, an evil symptom when professedly religious people are contending for a little more of this amusement, and pleading for a little extension of that gratification, and fighting to hedge in a little more territory to their pleasure-ground. Little do they think that they are thus exhibiting a kind of wisdom against themselves, that they are not yet renewed in the spirit of their minds. But, my young friends, it is time that I should turn to you: you are perhaps considering whether, if religion requires you to abandon the amusements and pleasures of the world, it has any of its own to compensate for the sacrifice which it demands. You are ready to ask, Are Christians, then, to have no

pleasures? Is recreation and enjoyment forbidden to them? A very interesting and important question, and which it is in our power satisfactorily to answer:—“Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.” You sacrifice, indeed, but it is only that you may enjoy. You relinquish vanity, and you escape vexation of spirit; but it is not a mere negative advantage that you derive,—you enjoy a real, a positive good. We therefore notice,

III. THE GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THOSE AMUSEMENTS, AND THE DEGREE IN WHICH THEY MAY BE SOUGHT, WHICH ARE COMPATIBLE WITH THE DIGNITY AND HAPPINESS OF MAN, AS A RATIONAL AND IMMORTAL BEING.

If you had no other pleasures than those which flow immediately from religion, you would never regret those you had abandoned for her sake. Religion has satisfactions of her own. A joy unspeakable and full of glory, a peace which passeth all understanding, a blessed hope full of immortality.

You may well turn away your eyes from beholding the vanity of such a world as the present. For lo! before the eye of your faith floats a happy island of the blessed; behold the light of its surpassing glories—listen to its sounds of sweetest melody. Beauty reposes in all its rich luxuriant scenery; peace, religion, and benevolence reign in all its families, and shed into every heart a moral gladness, uniting the whole society in one rejoicing symphony with each other, and with the beneficent Father of them all. Mere pain and mortality are unknown; and see, they beckon you to come; they hang out signals of welcome to invite your approach. O, keep that bright world in view, and this earthly scene will lose all its attractions and all its power. If we deprive you of one kind of excitement, we furnish you with another and a better; if we take from you the society which would degrade and destroy you, we introduce you to an innumerable company of angels; if we would allure you from the vain fables of earth, we supplant them with the words of heavenly truth.

If we shut against you the theatres of

human folly and crime, we open before you the solemn drama of Providence, and the wondrous scenes that shall burst upon your astonished souls, when that drama shall close and introduce you to a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. In imagination, you already behold the glorious appearance of the supreme Judge, the solemn state of his majestic person, the splendid pomp of his magnificent and innumerable retinue, the obsequious throng of glorious celestials doing homage to their eternal King; the swift flight of his royal guards, sent forth to gather the elect, and covering the face of the heavens with their spreading wings. The universal silent attention of all to that loud-sounding trumpet that shakes the pillars of the world, pierces the secret caverns of the earth, and resounds from every part of the circling heavens, to countless myriads of joyful expectants rising, changing, putting on glory, taking wing, and contending upwards to join themselves to the triumphant, heavenly host. The judgment seat, the books opened, the frightful amazed looks of guilty multitudes, the equal administration of the final judgment, the adjudication of all to their eternal states, the heavens rolled up as a scroll, the earth and all things therein consumed.

These are the peculiar felicities conferred by religion on her faithful votaries. In addition to these, there are pleasures arising out of the constitution of our nature, and which are appropriate to our present condition, which she permits and sanctifies. Religion takes nothing from us that is worth retaining; besides the exquisite enjoyments of devotion, there are those which spring from the love of natural scenery, for the cultivation of a literary taste, for the lighter branches of science, the fine arts, benevolence, the intercourse of friendship, and many other sources.

But if you wish for direction and caution on the subject of recreation and diversions, in connexion with a holy and consistent Christian profession, and which will teach you how to enjoy the whole amount of pleasure, without any deduction, for the painful consciousness

of having grieved the Holy Spirit, and hindered your prayers, I would give you both in the language of a distinguished minister of another communion.

Amusements are lawful under the following restrictions:—If there is something wholesome in them which almost refuses corruption; if the advantages they produce balance their mischief if corrupted; if, by scattering their oils around, they contribute to smooth without poisoning the waves of life; if their direct or chance expense does not break in upon the treasury which every man keeps for his neighbour; if they are not so closely allied to the amusements of the bad as to break down the wall of partition between us and them; if they have no tendency to wean society from more profitable employments; if, lastly, they do not encroach upon that handful of time bestowed upon man to do the business of eternity.

If all this be true, if any of them, I will say of him who uses them, he *may* be a Christian, and a good Christian; but I shall still think *him* the most distinguished Christian who uses them the least. The good, like the great man, (why, alas! are not the terms convertible?) while he *suffers* mere amusement, will never court it.

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#### A FRAGMENT—ON CHRISTIAN MISSIONS.

THE commencement of the nineteenth century will form a very important epoch in the future history of the world. Immortal honour will redound to Great Britain, for the spirit with which she has taken up the project, hitherto deemed impracticable, of Christianizing the vast territories of heathenism. Not that the plan has originated in the present age, but it has certainly been acted upon in a manner more systematic and effective than was ever imagined possible. I allude particularly to the translations of the Holy Scriptures into the vernacular tongues of the people to whom the missionaries are sent; without which their efforts must have been exceedingly limited, even if the number had been much greater than it is. Very little permanent good was

done before this work was attempted; but now it has been accomplished in so many instances, the labours of the missionaries are crowned with a proportionate success.

There cannot be any one project which is at the present time engaging the attention, and employing the mental and corporeal energies of busy and ingenious man, that so imperiously demands our admiration and aid, as those attempts which are now in active operation, to civilize and evangelize those vast portions of our globe which have hitherto been involved in all the horrors of superstition, ignorance, and barbarism. There is no one fact more indelibly stamped upon the past history of man, than that his emancipation from native darkness, by the beams of a foreign sun darting upon his benighted soil, has been succeeded by all those advantages of civilized life, which alone assign to man his proper province in the scale of being, and which only render his existence a real blessing to him. And there never was any scheme for improvement in his condition, ever presented to man by his fellow, for his adoption, that brought with it so many substantial benefits, and such intrinsic happiness, as that of Christianity. It is this system which has given to the highest order of animated nature with which we are acquainted, an importance, but faintly seen in the distance, by some of the wisest of the ancients, before its introduction to the world. It is Christianity which has opened to its possessors such rich and inexhaustible sources of information, on the most sublime and important of subjects, as will continue to flow to posterity, undiminished in value, to the latest period of time. It is Christianity, in short, that will speedily spread over the whole habitable globe, and unite the near and the distant portions of it, in one indissoluble bond of amity and peace! May the Divine Being hasten the happy era, when the knowledge of his gospel shall stretch from one end of the earth to the other, and when all nations shall hail him blessed!

In the promotion of this cause, we are not called upon to contribute towards the extension of the commerce of wealth, but

the commerce of mind; not to aid the advancement of political dominion in the shape of war, but to extend the spiritual dominion of the Son of God, to help to bring about that glorious consummation, when all the inhabitants of this earth shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks. We are not even called upon to send out men for the philanthropic object of checking the dreadful diseases of the human body, but to send out devoted men for the *Christian* object of allaying the more dreadful maladies of the human heart. We are not solicited to lend our assistance towards the construction of some mighty iron or stone bridge over rivers, but a wooden one over oceans; not towards the erection of some splendid theatre, but for the exploring of the wide theatre of the world for the grandest and most benevolent purposes in which man can be engaged; not for the rearing of some sumptuous palace for the transitory occupation of an earthly monarch, but one for the continual habitation of the King of kings; not to build some gorgeous temple to an unknown God, or to some god of our own making, but to build up the living temple of the only living and true God.

This spiritual temple, unlike material ones, has no concealed parts, no portions of it hidden from view; and our individual exertions may help in the conversion of some poor sinner from the error of his ways,—to place a stone in that building, which, through eternity, may be a source of delights to saints and angels! Surely, then, this is a cause well worthy of our whole mind, and soul, and strength, to promote. Let us, then, do our utmost in the good work, and not suffer any unworthy considerations, suggested by earthly policy, to prevent us from advancing our spiritual and eternal interests, in exerting ourselves, as much as in us lies, remembering, that in doing this we are helping God, who has declared that what he does in the conversion of the world shall be done through human agency. Let this thought dwell in our minds, and it will stimulate us to work while it is called to-day, for the night cometh in which no man can work.

## SERMON XL.

THE COURSE OF THE GOSPEL.

BY THE REV. HENRY BELFRAGE, D. D.

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‘ And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem ; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea : in summer and in winter shall it be.’—Zech. xiv. 8.

AMONG the various evidences of the divine inspiration of the ancient prophets, there is one suggested by this chapter which claims peculiar attention. The predictions which they delivered were often directly opposed to the strongest prejudices and to the fondest hopes of their country. There have been impostors who have uttered the language of rebuke and alarm ; but it was in the season of calamity, and when the general terror seemed likely to secure to them attention and influence. Smooth things are most welcome to the ear, and most frequent in the lips of the deceiver ; but holy men of God delivered his warnings with fidelity and boldness, and whatever were the pangs which they felt for their country, they shunned not to declare the terrors of the Lord. These remarks are strikingly illustrated by the predictions of this chapter. The Jews were flattering themselves that the temple which they were rebuilding would stand to all ages, and that the ceremonies now re-established should never pass away ; that the nations should crowd to its altar as the fountain of mercy, and worship in its courts, as the threshold of heaven. In opposition to these conceits, the prophet assures them that their holy and beautiful house should be laid in ashes ; that their forms should be superseded by the rites of a simpler, yet brighter economy ; and that the waters of the sanctuary should

leave the land of Judah desolate, and direct their course over the Gentile world, making truth to spring from the earth, and righteousness to bless the nations. We know that this flood will return to Palestine, not for the resurrection of the dead, but for grace to the living ; bearing on its stream Messiah, not in the pomp of power, but in the beauty of holiness ; and lifting its voice, not with the shout of war, but with the song of the Lamb. It is in the course of these waters over the Gentile nations that we are especially interested ; and the contemplation of it, as described in the text, may excite feelings suited to the object of our present meeting, and adapted to lead us to improve the gospel for our eternal salvation.

I. OUR ATTENTION IS FIRST CALLED TO THE DESIGNATION HERE GIVEN TO THE GOSPEL,—“Living waters.” In such a climate as the east, water is regarded as an element of inestimable value, and allusions to it had a peculiar charm ; but even to us such figures must be pleasing, and they present the objects which they are intended to exhibit in a form both agreeable and instructive. The simplicity and the beauty of Scripture imagery interest at once the fancy and the heart.

This designation points out *the purity of the gospel*. It is in the stagnant pool that weeds grow, and that noxious creatures abound, but the running stream is

usually clear. And thy word, O Lord, is very pure; therefore doth thy servant love it. Holiness to the Lord is stamped on all its principles, commandments, and rites. It is a dispensation of mercy, but it gives no indulgence to the least sin. Grace is its brightest character, but that grace is the strongest impulse to holiness. It is amazing that parties, the most hostile to each other in their feelings, should unite in their opposition to the holiness of the gospel. There are some who, in their zeal for what they call its grace, represent it as relaxing the obligations of morality, and condemn the inculcating of its duties as an attempt to add to the work which Christ has completed for the sinner's hope: and others who profess to be eager for the promotion of virtue, exhibit the gospel as more indulgent than the old dispensation to human frailty, and as requiring, not perfection but sincerity in goodness; but the object of Christianity is to make its disciples stand complete in all the will of God: it animates obedience by new motives, and by a more ample influence, and sets before us an example of all excellence, and states conformity to it as the whole duty and the highest attainment of man.

It points out *the refreshment which it yields*. As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so are good news from a far country. How sweet are its offers of pardon to the awakened conscience! and never was there language more soothing to the heart than this, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." How precious are its promises of help and peace to the afflicted and the feeble! and how reviving is its hope of life and immortality to the mourner cleaving to the dust! The world excites; but that excitement is momentary, and it is soon succeeded by deeper depression. False religions can have no other result on the mind and heart than languor and stupefaction, but the joy and the peace which are felt in believing are the strength and life of the spirit. The religion of Mahomet resembles the whirlwind of sand in the desert, darkening the air, overwhelming all before it, and filling the eyes, and ears, and

mouth of the parched traveller with dust; but the gospel brings with it the peace of God, when the poor and the needy seek water and there is none.

This designation points out also *the fertility which the gospel produces*. The "flowing stream" fertilizes the district through which it passes; and "the gospel," saith Paul, "is come to you, as it is in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth." Other institutions have sought, as their object, the promotion of decorum of manners, austerity of character, or restraint from crime; but Christianity aims at forming the love of God in the heart and conduct. It has taught piety to childhood, and heavenly-mindedness to age; charity to the rich, and contentment to the poor; sobriety to the vicious, and devotion to the ungodly; wisdom to the simple, and contrition to the hardened. It forms the gentleness which blesses families, the purity which adorns churches, and the righteousness which exalteth a nation. It must be remembered that it is the Spirit of the Lord moving on the face of these waters which imparts to them all this virtue. "It is the Spirit that quickens; the flesh profiteth nothing;" and to him our prayers should rise for that divine influence by which the word of the Lord shall have free course and be glorified—by which it shall be evinced that the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul—that the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple—that the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart—and that the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. And to such a religion shall not we cleave with purpose of heart? Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon that cometh from the rock of the field? or shall the cold flowing waters which flow from the hill of Zion be forgotten? To these questions I trust our hearts are replying, as Peter did to a similar question from his Master,— "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."

II. LET US NOW ATTEND TO THE PLACE FROM WHICH THESE WATERS ISSUE. The

east has been styled "the cradle of science," and from it many sublime discoveries have been brought to the western world; but none of these are, in value, like the law which came out of Zion. When Christ ordered repentance and remission of sins to be preached, in his name, to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, the banks within which these living waters had flowed were broken down, and the stream began to rush over the Gentile world. How bold was the language of Paul and Barnabas to the Jews, who forbade them to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved; "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you, but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." There was a striking display of the wisdom of God in this arrangement, for, as Jerusalem was the place where those great facts took place, to which all the doctrines and claims of Christianity point, it was fit that it should go to the Gentiles with this high presumption in its favour, that it had been published on the spot where its Founder suffered and triumphed, without one supported charge of fraud or imposition. The connexion of the new with the old dispensation made this still more necessary, for thus the attention of inquirers was turned to the prophecies and the rites which for ages had been preparing the way of the Lord.

But it may be said that these waters flow from Jerusalem, as it is by the church that they are communicated. They are brought to the church not only that they may be improved but diffused. This is our Saviour's charge,—“Freely ye have received, freely give;” and such is the impulse of its spirit of charity. Amidst the regret and shame which we feel at her long neglect of this great duty, it is some consolation to think on what God hath led her to do during the last forty years. This is the greatest glory God hath shed on our country—a glory far beyond any which shines on the pages of our history, or the records of our science—a glory marked by the pious of other lands, not with envy, but with

gratitude and delight. I allude to it, not in the spirit of exultation, but to excite us to advance in the path into which God hath led us, and to be in labours for him much more abundant. During the twenty-seven years that the British and Foreign Bible Society has existed, it has circulated more than seven millions of copies of the Scriptures, at an expense of nearly two millions of pounds sterling; and it is engaged in promoting the translation, printing, or distribution of the Scriptures, or portions of them, in more than one hundred and fifty languages, or dialects. To this statement I may add the many hundreds of missionaries sent out by the different missionary societies, to make God's way known in the earth, and above forty of these have been sent forth by the society in whose behalf I now address you; and when I think that all this has been done in seasons of public depression, and during two long wars, enormous in their expenditure, grievous in their sacrifices, and often alarming in their aspect, I feel constrained to say, What hath God wrought! "If the Lord had been pleased to kill us, he would not have accepted such offerings of piety and mercy at our hands, nor would he have showed us things like these."

III. BUT LET US MARK THE COURSE OF THESE LIVING WATERS. The statement given of it in the text seems to intimate that the gospel should bless the nations of the eastern and of the western world. The course of these waters has hitherto been chiefly to the western sea. Europe has been blessed with them to a wonderful extent, and now they are flowing over the vast continent of America, in a stream more majestic than that of its mightiest rivers. If we look to the eastern world, we see here and there only a scanty rill, which seems on the point of being lost in the sand: but Providence is intimating that the time to favour that region is come, in the plans which are formed, and the attempts which are making to introduce the gospel into China, into Abyssinia, and among the different tribes and nations of the East Indies. Most unworthy of our character, as a Christian people, was the conduct of Britain, for a

long period, to India. What a striking description of that treatment is given in the words of Burke:—"Animated with all the avarice of age, and all the impetuosity of youth, Englishmen roll in, one after another—wave upon wave—and there is nothing before the eyes of the natives but an endless prospect of new flights of birds of passage, with appetites continually renewing for the food that is continually wasting. Other conquerors have left monuments either of taste or beneficence behind them, but England has built no bridges, cut no canals, dug out no reservoirs, formed no roads, and were we to be driven out of India, nothing would remain to tell that it had been possessed, during the period of our dominion, by any thing better than the ouran-outang or the tiger." Since the period of that speech, a most happy change has been effected. Various excellent methods have been employed for improving the temporal condition of the many millions there under our sway, and different societies have made it the sphere of missionary labour; and, instead of producing rebellion and ruin to British power, as infidelity and worldly wisdom predicted, these preachers of the cross are meekly and safely guiding the feet of the natives in the way of peace.

In the Carnatic, there are more than a thousand reservoirs, from which water-courses are made to refresh the fields. These are the monuments of princes who were fathers of their people,—the tokens of a bounty which delighted not in deeds whose praise might reach the ear, or in memorials of vain pomp, but in operations productive of lasting utility, and of gratitude ever fresh as the stream which calls it forth. But more noble still is their charity who have opened the wells of salvation in that parched land, at which race after race may obtain consolation under all the sorrows of time, and grace for all the felicities of eternity.

But we look for a more extensive diffusion of the gospel in all quarters of the world. There are vast regions of our globe where millions are perishing for lack of knowledge, and on which no drops from heaven have fallen; but it

shall not always be so, for "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness to all nations, and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." When we consider by whom these assurances are given—that their fulfilment is associated with his own glory, as well as the salvation of men—that these results are a part of the Mediator's reward—of the joy which was set before him,—and that all power is given to him for their accomplishment in heaven and in earth, we can rejoice in hope that many shall come from the east and west, from the north and south, to honour the name, and share the grace of the Saviour of the world.

There are various circumstances which indicate that a more extensive diffusion of the gospel will soon take place. The expeditions of travellers, which have been conducted to such extent in the present day, to enlarge our acquaintance with the aspects of our globe, and with the materials of science, shall be made to serve the higher purpose of tracing out channels for the water of life. He who sends the springs into the valleys, and gives drink to every beast of the field; who waters the hills from his chambers, and satisfies the earth with the fruit of his works, will assuredly open rivers in high places, and fountains of life in the midst of the valleys, make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. The moral elements are as much at his command as those of nature, and in their operation and influence he finds his chief glory.

The missionary spirit which he has created and maintained is a token for good. With the utmost eagerness do the Egyptians expect the rising of the Nile. No sooner do they mark its waters swelling than they rejoice exceedingly, for they know that on its overflow depends the fertility of their fields, and their supplies of water for many months; and with much more delight should we behold waters breaking out in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; and much more earnestly should we labour that men may be blessed in the Redeemer,

and that all nations may call him blessed. There is no man who hath felt the terrors of guilt, and obtained relief in the Redeemer's blood, but must feel the strongest compassion for those who are groaning under the power of sin; and he who gives to one perishing sinner a cup of this water, in the Saviour's name, shall in no wise lose his reward.

IV. BUT LET US MARK THE CONTINUANCE OF THE COURSE OF THOSE LIVING WATERS. Their flow shall neither be impeded by the drought of summer nor the frosts of winter. As the waters which flowed from the rock smitten by Moses followed the Israelites during the whole of their journeys in the wilderness, so these waters shall continue to flow till the mystery of God is finished. There is not the least reason to dread the cessation of their course. Sometimes this stream has forsaken one channel, but it has sought out another; and sometimes it has been like streams which sink under ground and flow for a time in the subterranean course, but it again bursts forth, like them, and pursues its way with as much purity and strength as ever. Do you imagine that because various institutions, formed for enlightening and improving men, have passed away, that this may be the case with the gospel? It depends for its permanence not on human policy and might, but on Christ, the wisdom of God, and the power of God. Do you fear that it may fail through the influence of infidelity? Infidel power has been swept away before it, and, whatever boasts it may utter, its schemes and its efforts shall be quenched like the fire of thorns. Do you imagine that it may be destroyed by the corruptions which mingle with it in its course? Remember from what gross corruptions it has purified itself in its progress, and that its holy energy is almighty and eternal. It has been thought that the progress of science and freedom will be fatal to it; but they will display the beauty and the influence of genuine Christianity. The approach of the traveller discovers to him that the lake in the desert, so inviting at a distance, is a mere illusion of the senses, but his coming nearer the

living stream opens to him more fully the breadth, the power, and the beauty of its course.

The effects of the gospel on the souls of disciples are perpetual also. The knowledge it gives is everlasting light; the peace it yields is everlasting consolation; the love it inspires is a charity that never fails; and the holiness it forms is a well of living water, springing up into everlasting life. The influence of other monitors fails before the power of temptation, and other comforters have spoken in vain amidst the tumult of sorrow; but the power of the gospel is most apparent in seasons of trial. How delightful is this view of the subject, and how happily adapted is it to reconcile the mind to all the sad vicissitudes of life. Poverty may come, but thy bread shall be given thee, and thy waters shall be sure. Ministers, the helpers of your joy, are not suffered to continue, by reason of death; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. Lover and friend may be put far from you, but the living Redeemer shall bring the water of life to your hearts, and tell you that he will be your Friend for ever. The founders of other systems have wept at the thought that their name and their influence should not long survive them; but you may exult in the persuasion, that Christ's name shall endure for ever, and that his gospel shall issue in life eternal. "Yea, he shall live:" others must die, but he is alive for evermore: "to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba; prayer shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised." And because he lives, his genuine disciples shall live also.

In reviewing this subject, we must surely feel the warmest gratitude to God for the gospel. Wonderful must be his love to man, who sends it where it is neither sought nor welcomed, and maintains it where it is despised and rejected. These living waters, O Lord Jesus, flow from thy throne, and to it as a throne of grace will we trace them. Let those who have believed the gospel adorn it by a good conversation. "This I pray, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and in all judgment, that

ye may approve things that are excellent, that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

And let those who have not yet received its message of mercy, now open their hearts to its influence. What will it avail you that the gospel is preached to others, if that it leaves you, saying, "I found you without feeling, and I leave you without hope?" There is a lake that burns with fire and brimstone, in which the unbelieving and the impenitent shall be tormented for ever, and who can assure you that the hand of the Almighty is not now stretching forth to cast you into it? Hear the voice of mercy, and your souls shall live. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

But I am especially called on by the duty of this evening, to urge you to act under the influence of those views of the gospel which have been presented to you, and to employ every talent which God hath committed to you, in the diffusion of that religion which can alone save from ignorance, sin, and misery, in whose Author you glory, as the way, the truth, and the life, and whose character is the delight, and whose promises are the hope of your hearts. The Redeemer is this night claiming our affectionate interest in his cause, and shall we refuse it? He will mark what we put into the treasury, and shall he see any hand turned away, or any donation unsuitable or reluctant? Our earnest prayers are ascending, that his kingdom may come, and in these intercessions shall any heart be silent? This, I trust, is the purpose which now actuates all of you. "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake will I not rest, till the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth."

The society, on whose behalf I address you, has special claims on your support; and I feel it incumbent on me to advert shortly to their different missions, to

strengthen your interest in their favour. It has six missionaries in Jamaica, and they are labouring there in circumstances which require our kindest sympathy. That mission was formed to heal the broken-hearted—to lighten the chains which we could not break asunder—to make the slaves free from the law of sin and death—and to prepare them for using wisely the privileges which might be allotted to them by the liberality of the age. An insurrection, more frightful than the hurricane, has burst forth in the seat of this mission, and, though it has been suppressed, the sky is dark and troubled; but nothing will calm the negro's spirit, or keep him from listening to the counsels which would hurry him to tumult and revenge, like the wisdom that comes from above, pure and peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated. The slave must be emancipated; but, without being prepared for it, it would be to him a curse, not a blessing; and that preparation can only be found in the benevolent spirit and the moral power of the gospel.

The Scottish missionary society has four missionaries in the East Indies. From India, the destroying angel has advanced to Europe, and has now reached our land, and his course can be traced in desolation, terror, and woe; but from Britain, the angel of light and mercy has taken flight to the east, with healing in his wings, and with the everlasting gospel of grace and truth, to occupy the place of their impure fables, and their rites of blood. To give you some idea of those burdensome, degrading, and evil superstitions, I may mention, that many thousands of people are employed in carrying water from Hurdwar to Juggernaut, for the uses of that temple, whose idol is worshipped by deeds of lewdness and murder, too shocking to be detailed. I may state also, that when a sick person's life is despaired of, he is carried by his friends to the banks of their sacred river, and there exposed without the least shelter. His mouth, nose, and ears, are closely stopped with the mud of the river, and vessels of water are kept pouring on him; and it is amidst the agonies of disease, and the convulsive struggles

of suffocation, that the miserable Hindoo bids adieu to life. How can we think of this, without feeling the strongest impulse to make known to them that Saviour whose yoke is easy, and whose burden is light; who is as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

This society has two missionaries in Russia, one in Kaross, and one in Astracau. The disappointment of our hopes as to Astracau was indeed painful; but we will stand by those who have remained at the post of duty, amidst perils and alarms, and the sickness of hope deferred. Of the excellent man still labouring there, I would say, "The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee from the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou hast put thy trust." Who can tell what God may do by the remnant that is left? "The remnant of Jacob shall be among many people, as a dew from the Lord—as the shower upon the grass that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men." Other missions have been contemplated by this society, and they require only the public aid to go forward. How desirable would be a mission to Persia, where the British name is so high; where the influence of Mahometanism is rapidly declining; and where many tracts and portions of the Bible are in circulation.

The times are portentous, and mighty changes are on their course, and it is our duty to diffuse those religious and moral principles which can alone give peace to the world. We will most effectually secure the safety and the repose of our own country, by fulfilling the law, and extending the empire of the King of righteousness and Prince of peace. The pestilence is walking around us, and so quick is its work, that none of us can say but to him it may be allotted to realize the words of Job, "Now shall I sleep in the dust, and they shall seek me in the morning, but I shall not be." May God grant that at whatever hour, and in whatever form death may come to us, it may find us waiting for the appearing, and labouring in the work of Christ. How

affecting were the last words of the late Bishop of Calcutta. After some affairs of devotion were closed, he said in the most solemn manner, "O thou God of all grace, who hath called us to thy eternal glory by Christ Jesus, stablish, strengthen, and settle us. Have mercy on all, that they may come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved. There is no other name given among men by which they can be saved. Other foundation can no man lay"—and he spake no more. What a beautiful testimony to the spirit and the hope of the gospel. In that spirit may we live, and in that hope may we die! "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for you all is, that you may be saved." Amen.

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#### THE BLESSINGS OF AFFLICTION.

*"It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting."*—Ecl. vii. 2.

WHEN perplexed with the cares of this life, or disgusted with its frivolous pursuits, we look around in search of some other consolation, as a source of happiness. When having drunk deeply of the cup of affliction, the heart is wounded by its sorrows, and the world withdraws its sympathy, then are we best prepared to think seriously of that which appertains to our eternal welfare. But when prosperity holds out her insidious hand, and the earth confers all its honours and allurements, then is man too prone to forget that this world is but a caravansary. Then does he cling with a blind affection to that which is deceitful, and build his hopes upon unstable foundations. Then, alas! are the interests of an hereafter banished from the mind, as unwelcome guests of another world. For, as Cowper justly sings,—

"Pleasure is deaf when told of future pain,  
And sounds prophetic are too rough to suit  
Ears long accustom'd to the pleasing lute."

Julia D—— was the gayest of a fashionable and dissipated circle. Deprived of the instructions of a parent at an early age, she had been brought up without restraint, and left to rove at liberty in search of pleasure. In person she was lovely; her sparkling eyes betrayed the intelli-

gent countenance, her smiling lips the heart that was unsoured by mortification. Though her education had imparted much that was showy and superficial, yet she was by no means deficient in intellectual attainments. Beautiful, rich, and amiable, she could not be destitute of admirers, who would pour into her ear the language of flattery. Yet, with all that seemed necessary to confer earthly felicity, she was not what the world called her, or what she herself wished to be, happy. A burst of feeling, an exhilarating flow of spirits, often enlivened her countenance, yet as often would the vacancy of an idle hour, or the silence of solitude, whisper that there was "one thing needful." It was the want of this requisite, that impaired her seeming joy in this moment, and launched her out into all the extravagancies of gayety in the next.

It was about this period that she was on the eve of being united to one in every respect her equal. Whatever might have been her feelings with regard to the gayety and dissipation in which she lived, this last circumstance engrossed her utmost soul, and formed one of the strongest ties that bound her to this world. Without narrating all the intermediate incidents, it may only be observed, that when the full consummation of her happiness seemed to be not only in prospect, but near at hand, she was visited with affliction and grief. He, on whom her earthly felicity depended, was suddenly cut off, and carried to the silent grave.

To those who have been brought up in the school of adversity, calamitous events do not excite that unalleviated sorrow, which rends the hearts of those on whom the vial of misery is poured when in the midst of their most joyful prosperity. Julia felt the blow keenly. The chastening hand of Providence had torn away the object of her love, that object which had entwined around her heart's inmost joys. She was like some gay flower on the mountain's brow, on which the unfeeling storm has poured its fury, that still retains existence, even when despoiled of its beauty. She pined in secret. None could sympathize, for none could conceive the ardour of her affection. The condolence of the world was dis-

gusting; it made her deeply sensible of the want of one to whom she could pour out the sorrows of her soul.

The skeptic would have arraigned the decrees of Providence. He would have regarded the bereavement not only as cruel, but unjust, and have plunged headlong into the vortex of dissipation.

"One part, one little part, we dimly scan

Through the dark medium of life's feverish dream,

Yet dare arraign the whole stupendous plan,  
If but that little part incongruous seem."

But God seeth not as man seeth. It is a good thing to be afflicted; and so Julia felt. The world had lost all its charms. Its pleasures had satiated; its frivolities had lost their enchanting spell. With a heart broken in affliction, where could she turn, but to that neglected Source of all goodness? Well would it be, if all would "consider in the day of adversity," and hail the chastening rod, as that which brings the wandering soul back to its duty. But more than this, serious reflection had convinced her of the impropriety of the dissipation in which she had lived, and led her to form those resolutions which she has never since broken.

Though the expression of her beautiful features is still melancholy, yet it is that of subdued sorrow. Those sparkling eyes that once flashed with the brilliant coruscations of wit and youthful animation, now beam forth with a mild devotional feeling, that indicates the entire change within. She bears in her countenance that humility, seriousness, and sweetness of disposition, which is one of the surest indexes of the Christian's heart. This is not all: her benevolence and charity to the distressed, and her religious consolations to the afflicted, have endeared her virtues to the humble sons of poverty.

Now her heart can adore the mercy of the all-wise Creator in thus weaning man from his too close affection to the world by the hand of affliction, so that he may approach to behold the neglected face of Him who is ever gracious and long-suffering. And now that she has tasted of the imperishable joys which spring from religion, she can see that the cares and pleasures of this life are indeed "vanity and vexation of spirit."

## SERMON XLI.

ON THE DANGERS TO WHICH THE YOUNG ARE EXPOSED FROM THE  
ENTICEMENTS OF SINNERS.

BY THE REV. JOHN HUNTER.

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*“ My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.”—Prov. i. 10.*

YOUTH is the most interesting and important period of our moral probation for eternity. In it the young begin to be freed from that parental authority and discipline, which restrain them from the practice of vice, and give a general tone to their sentiments and conduct, in which their own inclinations and choice have but little share. They are then called, in some measure, to think, to judge, and to act, for themselves. They enter on the wide theatre of the world, unaided by that superintending care and ardent love, which had hitherto guided them in every time of perplexity and doubt, and guarded them from every danger to which their virtue was exposed. *Now*, the principles which had been early instilled into their minds, are to be brought to the test of trial. They have arduous and difficult duties to perform—they have powerful and seductive temptations to resist; and on the course of action they pursue at this critical period, their future character and destiny may, in a great measure, depend. I readily admit, that even the most profligate youth may hereafter be awakened, by the sovereign power of divine grace, and introduced, by penitence and faith, into the family of God; yet still, it cannot be denied that early conversion is the best, perhaps the only security, for a holy life, a happy death, and a blessed immortality. In the morning of our days, vice has not yet made its deepest inroads upon our intellectual and moral constitutions; the enmity of the human mind

towards its Creator, has not assumed its most malignant form; the natural propensities, our strong and violent passions, may be more completely regulated or controlled, and the lineaments of a new and divine nature more easily impressed on the understanding and the heart. Influenced by such sentiments and feelings, will the good man raise the eye of faith and of holy desire, to that Divine Being, who alone can preserve his beloved children from falling, and with all the warmth of parental tenderness, labour, ere they quit that endeared abode where they have already experienced a father's care and a mother's love, to impress upon them lessons of wisdom and piety, and to prepare them for entering, with respectability and usefulness, on the busy scenes of active life. This appears to have been the chief end for which the book of Proverbs was designed by its royal author; and no portion of sacred Scripture seems better adapted for affording instruction, and communicating salutary reproof and warning to the young. It exhibits an accurate acquaintance with the various windings of the human heart, and with those mazes of error, which, in early life warp the understanding, corrupt the principles, and debase the conduct. Often have these Proverbs been employed by parents, for fixing salutary and important lessons on the minds of their offspring; and no advice which this book contains, can be of higher importance than that which I have selected as the subject of our present

meditation. Let me then, my young friends, solicit your serious attention, while, with all the affection of a father, and of a friend, I remind you of some of those arts by which sinners will entice you from the paths of duty to violate the sacred laws of your God.

In the first place, *you may be exposed to the baneful influence of bad example, to the force of ridicule, and to the power of persuasion.* Even in the bosom of the most pious family, the young cannot remain entirely ignorant of evil. They perceive the germs of it in their own hearts: they behold the exhibition of it even in the comparatively virtuous circle in which they move; they are taught it in the invaluable records of divine truth, and read it in every page of secular history, and in the daily occurrences of human life. But while, even at this early period, they have tasted of a portion of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of evil, yet still, its poisonous influence is, in a great measure, counterbalanced by the affectionate counsels, the salutary warnings, and the good example of the parents and the friends who are dear to their hearts. Seldom, however, are they permitted long to remain in these tabernacles of the righteous; for they have their chief associates among the dissolute of the earth, whose society they will, in all likelihood, relish. It may be, that the providence of God is now casting their lot in very different scenes. They are called, perhaps, to live under the same roof with young persons of the same age, and engaged in the same pursuits with themselves, who are entire strangers to every act of sacred duty—who hardly ever peruse the volume of inspiration—who speak of the most sacred subjects with the most unbecoming levity—who dare to profane the blessed name of Jehovah, or to utter oaths of imprecation against their fellow-creatures—who habitually violate the duties of the Sabbath, and are frequently debased by injustice or falsehood, or by habits of intoxication or impurity. Even where the principles of the divine life have not been implanted in the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, but where an individual

has enjoyed the advantage of a religious education, it is impossible to be brought into immediate contact with dissipation and profligacy, without deep emotions of repugnance and horror. The youthful mind feels that they are opposite to reason and divine revelation; it contrasts them with the cheerful piety which prevailed in the paternal home, and it firmly resolves to act a wiser and a better part. Soon, however, the young are taught by dire experience, that "evil communications corrupt good manners." They do indeed clearly perceive the distinction between right and wrong—between sin and holiness, but they no longer feel that horror and disgust which open and unblushing wickedness, and even irreligion and impure conversation, once so powerfully excited in their minds. They have not, indeed, learned to imitate the conduct of the ungodly, to stand in the way of sinners, and sit in "the seat of the scornful;" but their reverence for all that is holy, and their admiration of all that is good, have been greatly weakened, and piety appears rather as one of the adjuncts of a virtuous character, than as the only source whence all pure and genuine morality must proceed; and now it is that their companions begin to deride their strict adherence to the external ordinances of religion, to laugh at what they are pleased to call their sanctimonious demeanor, and to represent them as fanatics, enthusiasts, or hypocrites. If these arts are unavailing, they next have recourse to the winning influence of kindness—they profess that it will afford them satisfaction, if for once they will taste of the same forbidden pleasures of which they have partaken, and their compliance they represent as a test of their friendship and affection. As these arts succeed, they ply them with new arguments and entreaties; and, looking with mildest aspect, and going about them with all the eloquence they can command they rest not satisfied till they have lured them to the performance of some act which they feel to be in direct opposition to the voice of conscience and the law of God.

In the young mind, the principle of

curiosity is generally strong and powerful. It longs to become acquainted with new objects, and to enter into new scenes; it is apt to be too confident of its strength, and fearless of danger; it has not been taught to shun the beginnings of evil, and to keep that strict guard on itself which is the surest protection of virtue. How often do we behold the young looking, without apparent displeasure and awakening fear, at those whom they secretly despise, and sacrificing, at the shrine of the world's love, principles and habits associated with every godly affection and holy feeling, and which they know to be connected with their present usefulness and their everlasting happiness. It may be, my young friends, that some of you are at this moment exposed to the temptation I have described, and on the verge of that dangerous precipice which is ready to engulf you in all the perdition of guilt and misery. Stand, I entreat you, ere it be too late. I call not on you to abandon the world and renounce its society. No. The wheat and the tares must grow together till the harvest; and the righteous and the wicked must mingle together in the same transactions of business, and may even be associated in the same domestic circle. But shut not your eyes to the magnitude of the danger to which you are exposed; say not with Hazeel, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" Remember that there is within you an evil heart of unbelief, that is ever ready to depart from the living God. Be not hurried into the commission of sin from that inconsideration which refuses to inquire into the path of duty, and which marks not the consequences of actions. Think it not to be a commendable quality, or a sign of an amiable temper, that we cannot refuse any request, while we know it to be injurious to ourselves, or subversive of the best interests of Him who made us. O! shrink not from your duty in consequence of the contempt of fools. Remember that God is not ignorant of the recesses of the heart, that he is acquainted with every word of the lips, and that the most secret actions of your life are recorded in the book of his remembrance. Bringing

the principles, the precepts, the encouragements of Christianity to bear on the common duties of life, carry them with you into the avocations of business, and into the society of the giddy or the gay—carefully scrutinize the operations of your own minds—strip off the disguises by which self-partiality conceals them from your view, or changes their real character—set a watch on the door of your lips—shun the beginnings of evil—let the perfect character of the Saviour be continually present to your thoughts, and his life continually present to your souls—learn to distrust yourselves, and to live in the faith of Christ—let your souls ascend to God in fervent prayer for the enlightening, sanctifying, and strengthening influence of his Holy Spirit, and never, O! never, forget the solemn words of the Lord Jesus Christ, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God; but he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God."

A second temptation by which sinners endeavour to entice the young and inconsiderate into the path of vice, is by setting before them splendid and seductive representations of the riches and enjoyment with which it is accompanied. The young are now entering on the serious duties of human life. Reason teaches them that they are bound to cultivate their talents, and apply both the powers of their body and the faculties of their mind to such subjects as may enable them to pursue and secure for themselves the means of subsistence, and to obtain situations of respectability and usefulness. Revelation confirms this in the strongest and most explicit terms, and often have they been reminded by parents whom they love, that "The hand of the diligent maketh rich," but that sloth bringeth to want. It is, however, no easy task to combine activity in business with fervour of spirit in serving the Lord; and multitudes having heard the word receive it with joy, whose religious convictions and impressions are afterwards completely destroyed by the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches. They who, having embarked

in life, bring themselves, by the influence of conversation and example, to consider affluence as the highest created good, delight to think of opulence, honour, and distinction, and of adding house to house, and field to field. They anticipate the period when they shall be placed in a very different sphere from that in which they are now called to move, when they shall exercise authority, possess fame, and be permitted to enjoy the various gratifications which wealth and luxury afford; and it may be that they indulge even the thought that they will then be able to requite the obligations of worthy parents and friends—to supply the wants of the poor and the afflicted—and to promote the interests of knowledge, religion, and virtue. Indulging in these fancied dreams of worldly greatness, while they labour with unwearied industry for that meat which perisheth, they quickly become forgetful of that meat which endureth to everlasting life. Like the thoughtless beings with whom they now associate, their first and last thoughts are directed to the world; and they sacrifice duty to interest, imbibe principles opposed to the purity and spotless simplicity of the Christian faith, and adopt maxims which they once abhorred. They now become careless about overreaching their neighbours, or indulging in petty fraud—they flatter the great and the powerful—they scruple not to utter falsehood for selfish ends—they cannot afford time for self-examination, secret prayer, or reading of the Scriptures—and not unfrequently a large portion of the Sabbath is devoted to the summing up of accounts, concluding bargains, and preparing for the transactions of the ensuing week. The love of money is the root of all evil, which some have coveted after they have embraced the faith, and thus pierced themselves through with many sorrows. It was this that induced Judas Iscariot to betray our blessed Lord; and it is this which has often led to treachery, cruelty, robbery, murder, and almost every crime that has stained the annals of our guilty race. Beware, then, lest mammon become the god you serve. Remember that, while thus the principles are corrupted,

the feelings debased, and the conduct vitiated, all the schemes you have formed may be also completely disappointed, and that you may be taught by your own experience that “riches make themselves wings, and fly away, as an eagle towards heaven.” The happiness of beings does not consist in the abundance of what they have, but in contentment, which is itself a feast. Can all the power of Alexander, can all the wealth of Cræsus, appease the wrath of God—mollify the stings of a guilty conscience—assuage the agonies of disease—give health or strength to a debilitated frame—save from the darts of the king of terrors, or deliver from the miseries of hell fire? No. You know, and will readily acknowledge, that it cannot. O! then, be not led away by these wicked adversaries, who care neither for your souls nor for their own, and who have never yet learned the force of that solemn interrogatory—“What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

But I have also said, that the love of pleasure, as well as riches, has ever proved one of the most successful means of enticing young men into the path of vice. There are multitudes of young men that care not for riches, and have not the slightest desire to mount the ladder of ambition, but pleasure is the enchanting sorceress whose powerful spell they are unable to resist. Many are her worshippers, whom she wiles in the most attractive forms. I readily admit, that our religion is not the enemy of innocent pleasure, and is the friend of cheerfulness; it expects not from the young the gravity of age, but that sobriety of mind, and that chastened joy, which become a rational and accountable being. There are, however, many fascinating amusements common in the world which are destructive of the love of God in the soul of man—utterly inconsistent with that reverence for the Deity, that awe of his name, that veneration of his word, that purity of heart, that correct and exemplary deportment, without which Christianity is a form without substance, a shadow without a reality, a name to

which no character or being is annexed. There are other pleasures less criminal in their own nature, but attended with injurious effects to our spiritual and eternal interests, which lead the mind from the pure fountain of excellence; encroach upon those hours which ought ever to be sacred to retirement and devotion; give a distaste for the private pleasures of domestic life, and are attended with the pomp and the glory which are too apt to engender those habits of lightness and frivolity of mind which unfit for the discharge of this life, while they prevent or retard our preparation for a better, and, it may be, become stepping-stones to the gratification of those fleshly lusts which war against the spirit, and end in the utter ruin of both soul and body. Let me, then, adopt the words of Solomon—"My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." All the beauties of nature, my young friends, are unveiled before you; there is no branch of science from which your religion excludes you; you may innocently and usefully cultivate the various arts of civilized life—you may peruse the page of history—you may engage in those exercises that give vigour to your bodies, and elasticity to your minds—you may enjoy all the charms of social intercourse when guided by holy and virtuous principles—and you may cherish all the sensibilities of your nature, and taste, in rich abundance, the refined luxury of doing good. And are not these enjoyments of a far preferable kind to those to which sinners entice you? The former are the handmaids of religion, the latter the enemies of genuine godliness; the one calculated to lead your thoughts to the Author of nature, the Giver of all good, the other to estrange you from him, and sink you lower and lower in the scale of intellectual existence. Avoid, then, the wicked, and their ways, resist their delusive arts. "O, my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united."

A third method by which sinners entice the young to the commission of vice, is by concealing its native deformity, and sedulously endeavouring to diminish their

*impressions of the danger with which it is attended.* "Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." Now this is the very course by which the wicked at first delude themselves, and then deceive others. Earnestness about the salvation of their souls, they represent as the wild ravings of enthusiasm; pride, in their vocabulary, is considered honourable, and humility a mark of weakness or ignorance; intemperance receives the mild epithet of conviviality, and seriousness is considered inconsistent with that vivacity of spirit which ought ever to pertain to youth; revenge is termed a proper regard to one's character and reputation, while meekness and patience, and forgiveness of injuries, expose the individuals who exhibit them to all the artillery of ridicule, or to all the contempt with which a coward is uniformly viewed. Bring these maxims to the test of reason and Scripture, and you will at once perceive that they are founded in error, and are incapable of rational defence. Nay, I strongly suspect, that at the very time you are reckoning upon them, you are aware that they will not bear to be scrutinized, and that the morality which opinion has sanctioned must appear to have no foundation in truth, and be utterly subversive of improvement and happiness of mind.

But then, it may be, that your irreligious companions allege, that God himself has implanted certain appetites in our nature, and that surely it is not contrary to his will that we should follow their dictates. Observe, my young friends, that every one of these appetites and passions are in themselves innocent, useful, and even indispensably necessary to our usefulness in this world, and that it is their perversion only that is criminal; and this will of Deity is clearly understood from the light of nature, for we uniformly perceive their moderate indulgence attended with pleasure, and their inordinate indulgence with pain and remorse. Hunger and thirst prompt us to seek that food or those viands which are necessary for the prolongation of life, and

the goodness of the Creator is manifested in satisfying these instinctive cravings; but gluttony and intemperance weaken and enervate the frame, and produce incapacity for thought and business, and mental imbecility or temporary insanity. Habits of business produce gain, but then the immoderate desire of gain inspires the mind with corroding cares, anxious fears, and that continual anxiety and dread which poison the cup of human bliss, and often render life insupportable. The desire of ease and pleasure was implanted within us to recruit our spirits, and invigorate our frames, when exhausted by the duties of life; and the many sources of happiness with which the bountiful Author of our being has so liberally gifted us, afford proof of his constant care and love. But pleasure is not to be our business, but our recreation; for no sooner do we devote our time and attention to it, than it ceases to afford gratification, and is uniformly attended with satiety and disgust. Any of you may extend these observations for yourselves; and apply them to the various instinctive propensities God has given us, and you will see that all is good that comes from the great Architect of the universe, and that it is human corruption alone that renders our intellectual, our moral powers, instruments of guilt or misery. Then you may be told by some, that our nature is so weak or infirm, that it is utterly impossible to resist the influence of temptation, or to counteract its powerful tendency to evil. But let me ask you, would you consider this a sufficient excuse for exempting an individual from the punishments which have always been affixed to the commission of an offence? If, indeed, it was proved that he was under mental derangement, or acted under the impulse of force, he would at once be declared free from moral guilt, and the infliction of punishment upon him would be deemed utterly unjustifiable; but the case is widely opposite, if it be found that his intellect was perfectly sound, and that the deed was voluntary. It is no apology for his crime, that he was impelled by what he called a strong and irresistible propensity to do

what he did. No! the evil inclination itself would be deemed the very essence of his crime. Now, apply this to the relation in which we stand towards God. We cannot deny that we possess powers of body and of mind, admirably adapted for the duties our Maker has called us to perform. We are, it is true, naturally inclined to do what is wrong, but every man, when he does what is wrong, is aware that he ought to have refrained from doing it. It is a perversion of the will that prompts him to evil, and this renders him guilty in the sight of that Being who searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins of the children of men. But still further to render unbelieving man utterly inexcusable, and to afford every assistance to all who desire to obey the law of God, the Almighty has promised the influence of the Holy Spirit to work in them both to will and to do of his own good pleasure, to restrain and eradicate the vicious propensities from their nature, and transform them into the glorious image of Him in whom perfection dwells.

But there is yet one other argument by which sinners entice the young and the inconsiderate to act unworthy of their rational and immortal nature. They tell them, that God is a being of boundless mercy, that thousands and tens of thousands of his creatures are still more guilty than themselves, and that it is impossible to suppose he will doom the helpless worms, whom his own hands have formed, to all the misery of everlasting punishment. God indeed is merciful, and it is because his compassions fail not that you are still in the land of the living and the place of hope. But remember, O! remember, I entreat you, that God is also just and holy, and will not allow sin to go unpunished. The attribute of infinity belongs to his justice and his holiness, as well as to his goodness and mercy. Would you be persuaded of this, behold the scenes of nature—there you see much to please the senses, to captivate the imagination, and inspire the heart with delight. The awful attributes of Divinity are also fearfully manifested in the rolling thunder, which fills every mind with awe; in the whirlwind and

the storm, which scatter desolation all around; and in the mighty earthquake, which in a moment destroys the most magnificent city, and plunges the inhabitants into an unseen, but eternal world. Consult, again, the dictates of conscience, and it will tell of the purity of Him who formed it, and whose vicegerent it is in the human breast, and in the agony of present remorse it will point to the still more exquisite misery of the worm that never dies, and the fire that is not quenched. Read the page of history. It contains a striking record of the judgments of the Most High, and there you may perceive, in characters the most deep and indelible, that while righteousness exalteth a nation, sin is the reproach, and will ultimately prove the ruin, of any people. Raise your eyes to Calvary, and there you will view, in the cross of Jesus, the most awful exhibition that was ever manifested to an intelligent creation, that Jehovah is a sin-avenging God, and that even while he is willing to pardon the penitent sinner, he will not allow guilt to escape unpunished. Yes, my young friends, the dying agonies of the Son of the Highest, attest this truth in a manner that may well cause the heavens to be astonished, the earth to wonder, and every human being to tremble, before the throne of the mighty Sovereign of the universe. And even in the book of God, and upon every page of it, you meet with the solemn declaration, that the ungodly shall not elude the judgment of their Creator, but that the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all they who forget God. O then, my young friends, "Be not deceived: God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Flee, then, without delay, to the Saviour, whose sacrifice can wash away all the stains of your past guilt, whose righteousness is your only covering when you stand in the presence of Him who inhabiteth eternity, and whose Spirit must create you again to good works, ere you can be permitted to enter the gates of the New

Jerusalem, and to participate in the exalted enjoyment of its blessed inhabitants. Amen.

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THE CONTRAST:—TWO DEATH-BED SCENES.

I SELECT from many similar cases which came under my observation, in the course of my professional avocations in various parts of the world, the two following.

These men, through life, professed sentiments very different from each other; and at the awful hour of dissolution, their feelings were indeed very opposite. They were both snatched away in the prime of life, one being twenty-four, and the other twenty-seven years old. A long and disinterested friendship with the former, induced him to request my attendance professionally; but all human skill was vain: the cold hand of death had seized him. Never in my life did I see the cheering effects of a religious life more strongly exemplified than on this occasion. His wife, his mother, and his five sisters, with myself, were present. Observing his female relations in tears, he requested them to come near, and, after a little pause, addressed them in nearly the following words: "Beloved friends, I perceive with regret the anguish of your souls; I say regret, because I had promised myself nothing but tranquillity and happiness, while the partition is breaking down that separates me from my God. I am entering on my last journey, which, so far from being terrible, is inviting and delightful." A paroxysm of pain here interrupted the interesting account, and for a minute he lay apparently insensible; but opening his eyes again, with a placid smile, he said, "I feel the infirmities of nature, but my sense of pain is lost in my ardent hope of salvation. I have heartily repented of all my sins, and firmly believe, through the mercies of my God, and the redeeming merits of my blessed Saviour, that I shall, in a few minutes, be numbered with the chosen of God. O my wife! my mother! my beloved sisters! I beseech you not to mourn my departure. I feel happiness unspeakable opening on

my soul, as it bursts from this wretched tenement." Then grasping my hand, he faintly exclaimed, "Ah, my friend! virtue is its own reward. See the effect of a religious life, and the blessed composure of a dying Christian!" He continued, "My lamp is nearly out; but, blessed be God, I feel that it has not burned in vain. O Lord God! forgive my impatience: I am ready to obey thy call, and anxious to receive thy promised rest." Here his voice failed,—his tongue faltered,—and his spirit took its flight to the bosom of its Father in heaven.

The picture of my other unhappy friend was just the reverse of the above. He had indulged freely in all the fashionable gayeties of the world; and if ever a serious or useful thought obtruded on his disordered fancy, it was immediately stifled by some idle debauchery.

In this mad career he quaffed away life to the dregs, and, before he arrived at the meridian of manhood, he was verging fast to the brink of eternity. A bacchanalian surfeit in a distant country brought on a fever, which threatened a speedy dissolution of life; and in this state I saw him for the first time for several years, and I am certain I shall never forget the painful feelings I endured throughout this melancholy interview. It is absolutely impossible to give even a faint idea of the horror, the agony, the heartrending terror, that harrowed up his soul, whenever the thought of death flashed across his mind. He received me with frenzied ardour, in which hope and fear were strongly depicted. "Alas!" he exclaimed, "you have come too late, for I am lost,—every way lost." I immediately perceived that life was ebbing fast; and being convinced that nothing short of divine interposition could retard his fate, I endeavoured to console him by drawing his attention to the mercies of God, and the saving mediation of a gracious Redeemer; to which he replied with asperity and violence, "If you have any friendship left for a degraded, self-pol-

luted wretch, torture not his last moments. My life has been spent in iniquity,—foolishly spent,—because it never yielded one hour of solid happiness. I have lived without thinking of God, and why should he now think of me, unless it be to judge me,—to damn me? O God! I shall go distracted!" A fainting fit intervened, and fortunately broke this mournful chain of reflections: but, alas, sensibility too soon returned, and with it fresh trains of gloomy despondency. He stared wildly, and roared out, "I have broken from him, but he is coming again,—there,—there,—death!—O, save me! save me!" After nearly an hour passed in this dreadful state, he again became capable of reflecting; but every moment added to his dejection. "I have been so bad," he exclaimed, "that God can never forgive me. I have blasphemed and dishonoured his holy name a hundred times, when my heart inwardly smote me. I have ridiculed and denied his existence, that my companions in error might think well of me: but I never was sincere in my wickedness." His mind became so agitated that all reasoning was lost; he was unable to repent; and the thought of death rent his very soul. In this perturbed state he languished for about four hours, from the time of my first seeing him; till, at length, overwhelmed by despair, a paroxysm of fever closed the tragic scene. The last words he uttered, that I could distinctly hear, were, "God will not, cannot forgive,"—the remainder was lost in a murmuring groan.

O my friends, could I convey to you any idea of the awful feelings which the wretched death of this wretched man produced upon my mind, it would, I think, deter the most thoughtless of you from those practices which ruin both soul and body. Would to God that you had been present! My description may not penetrate beyond the ear: but had you witnessed the dreadful original, it would have pierced your very hearts.—*Reid's Voyages to Van Diemen's Land.*

## SERMON XLII.

PROFESSED SUBJECTION TO THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.

BY THE REV. R. C. DILLON, A. M.

—◆—  
“*Your professed subjection unto the Gospel of Christ.*”—2 Cor. ix. 13.

It is striking to observe, while life is passing so quickly away, the various forms of character in which men choose to spend this temporary scene of being, and to enter upon a future and greater stage of existence. Now, if some one of these forms is more eligible than all the rest, as a preparation for that future stage, a thoughtful man will surely wish that character to be his own, and be anxious to ascertain which it is, as the most important of all inquiries. My brethren, I trust you are all persuaded that this inquiry, if seriously undertaken, will soon terminate satisfactorily in the conviction, that the Christian character, with all which it includes of professed subjection to the gospel of Christ, is the one which should be selected by every wise man who is awaiting his call into eternity. Permit me, then, to call your attention this evening to the words of the text, as furnishing three points on which we may profitably suspend a few observations.

And I request you to view the text, as containing, in the *first* place, A SUMMARY OF CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES—“the gospel of Christ.” *Secondly*, AN EPITOME OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE—“your subjection unto the gospel of Christ.” And, *thirdly*, AN EXHIBITION OF CHRISTIAN PRACTICE—“your professed subjection to the gospel of Christ.”

Let me, then, request you to consider our text as furnishing us, in the *first* place, with A SUMMARY OF CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES, *the gospel of Christ.*

And what is the gospel? It is a word  
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of frequent occurrence, both in conversation and in sermons. Now, what is it? It is the word of truth! It is the gospel of your salvation! It is called the gospel of the grace of God—the glorious gospel—our gospel—the gospel of Christ—the gospel of peace—good news—joyful tidings! It is, in short, a proclamation of salvation, full, finished, free, infallible, and eternal! We remark,

1. *That it is a full salvation.* A salvation having no defect; a salvation which requires no addition; a salvation which excludes all compromise, and includes all pardon, justification, adoption, righteousness, and all the qualifications necessary for enjoying God, with all the strength, security, and honour, which the redeemed receive and enjoy, through the Holy Spirit. It is, also,

2. *A finished salvation.* “Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the ends of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him!” No part of his work did our Saviour leave behind him; all was before him, all was done; he satisfied all the perfections of God, and answered all the requirements of man; he finished the work his Father had given him to do, as God’s righteous servant, and thus became his people’s Surety; he fulfilled every jot and tittle of the divine law; yea, he more than fulfilled it, he magnified it! As, at the constitution of the material world, when it came forth from its Creator’s hand, Omniscience itself could discern no

fault in it, so, neither could divine justice, after the most severe scrutiny, discover any failure in the obedience of man's Surety. In him was the Father well pleased; and therefore do we say it was a finished salvation. We remark, again,

3. *That it is a free salvation.* So free, that we need bring no purchase money in our hands to buy it. God hath abounded in all the riches of his grace towards us, and has given us a ransom to rely upon, of more dignity than all the heavens, and of more value than all worlds; he has given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. It is not here said whoever is *worthy*, but whoever is *willing*. Wilt thou, then, be made holy? Wilt thou inherit grace and glory? Then take the water of life freely, without money and without price, and without preparatory works, though not without works—but without preparatory good works—without any good works to recommend you to the gift—without any preparatory good works, or previous good qualities whatever; it is to be received as an infinitely rich gift of divine grace, vouchsafed through his only Son, to the lost, the guilty, and the undone. To *you* is the word of this salvation sent—not to you who have deserved it by your own goodness, but to you who have forfeited it by your sins and by your alienation from God; to you is this salvation published, that as sinners you may receive it, and that believing you may have salvation through his name. We may remark,

4. Of this salvation, that it is not only full, finished, and free, but that it is also *infallible* and *eternal*. “Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner; but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.”

Salvation is not a covenant or agreement merely between God and the believer—it is a covenant and compact between the three persons of the Godhead, each with

the other. The will of God the Father devised it; the suretiship of God the Son accomplished it; and God the Holy Spirit covenanted to impress the seal, and confirm the witness upon the sinner's soul. God the Father devised the stupendous plan; God the Son became responsible for the accomplishment of it, by making a full payment for every debt, and a full expiation for every sin, and by a perfect obedience to God's all-righteous and unbending law; and upon the credit of the bond which his Son had given, did the Holy Father take thousands and thousands home to heaven before his Son had shed one drop of blood, or paid one mite of the mighty ransom-price which our iniquities demanded. Nor is the responsibility of God the Spirit less involved in its infallibility; for to him the high office belongs of opening the eyes of the blind, of unstopping ears which are deaf, and of awakening them that sleep; of giving life to them that are dead; and of creating anew to Christ Jesus every member of the mystical body. Unless, then, it can ever come to pass that the purposes of God the Father can be revoked or frustrated, or that the fabric which has been built by God can be brought to the ground by man; unless the precious blood of God the Son can ever fail in washing white the deepest crimson-coloured sins; or, unless the Holy Spirit can ever prove powerless in executing the high office which belongs to his peculiar province in the covenant of grace: then it follows of necessity, that where salvation is once imparted to the believer, where the earnest and first-fruits are given, then the salvation of that individual is infallible and eternal.

We pass on, then, from this summary of Christian and scriptural principles, to consider the words of the text, in the *second* place, as containing AN EPITOME OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE—“your subjection to the gospel of Christ.” And much more is there in this word *subjection* than is at first sight discernible; there is a subduing necessarily included in it, which carries with it a supposition that man likes not the gospel of Christ natu-

rally. What, it may be asked, will not the blind man wish for sight? Will not the lame man wish to be healed? Will not the poor man wish for wealth? In natural things certainly these results do follow; but there is an utter diversity between things which are earthly, and those which are heavenly: for the one, there is a demand to which men are naturally urged by hunger, or thirst, or the other physical sensations and appetites of their constitution; but for the other, there is no natural appetite, because, in truth, there is no spiritual life; and where there is no life there is no hunger—for, before hunger can be excited, life must be created. You must not marvel, then, brethren, if your ungodly acquaintances do not hunger and thirst after righteousness; they are dead in trespasses and sins, and they must be made alive by the all-powerful influences of God's Holy Spirit, (for they have no power to regenerate themselves,) before they can ever hunger after those things which afford you all your solace and all your joy. The dead mass of the human soul cannot quicken into life of itself; it is the Spirit which quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the flesh never profited any man living, it is the Spirit only which can quicken. This, then, is the reason why we do not find the blind asking for eyesight, the lame for healing, or the poor for spiritual wealth; they seek not the physician, because they imagine they have no need of his prescriptions; they covet not of the transcendent fulness of Christ, because they think themselves rich, increased in goods, and to have need of nothing.

O, my brethren, sin has done dreadful havoc; it has made dismal ravages on our moral constitution; there is a deadly stock of corruption in the heart by nature; the moral machine has gone into disorder, and not a single power is there within the compass of that machinery to remodel it, and replace its disordered parts. Philosophy has had its ages of trial; and science has erected her thousand temples, and from her high academic chair hath wisdom (not, indeed, that which is from above, but earthly, worldly wisdom) de-

livered her ten thousand lectures on the beauty of virtue, and the hideousness of vice; but, what has been the result? Why, that which was powerful in promise became imbecile in performance; for wisdom and philosophy positively did nothing; the corruption of the human heart yielded not one iota to the eloquence of the schools; the depravity of the soul was far beyond them. And never will that depravity give way until it is brought into subjection to the gospel of Christ; the weapons which can do this are not those which are carnal, but those which "are spiritual and mighty through God,"—mark the important parenthesis, "through God:" it is he who must give the edge to the weapon, and force to the blow; which, without his interference, never can become mighty to the pulling down of strongholds, the casting down of imaginations, and of every high thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

And now, we will shortly notice the proofs of subjection to the gospel of Christ; or, in other words, the being made willing to submit to the humiliating plan of salvation; and this is illustrated in the case of St. Paul. We have recorded the circumstances attendant upon his conversion; and an account, at the same time, of his previous character, principles, and habits: he was a Pharisee of the most straitest sect, thinking of himself so highly as to conceive that he was doing God service; and yet, even this man, when touched by the finger of Omnipotence, fell prostrate to the earth, and furnished a marvellous instance of subjection to the gospel of Christ.

There is not a greater moral wonder than the great change of heart which was wrought upon St. Paul at his conversion: the whole powers of his mind and body were now engaged in a course totally opposite to the laws given to them by his temper, his education, the society in which he had moved; he renounces the favour of the Jewish sanhedrim, which it had been previously his study to gain by his persecution of the church in the time of his legal bondage; and, having undone

every thing which he had done before, and done every thing which he had before left undone, we see him encountering every hazard for the gospel's sake; his confidence in God rising exactly in proportion to the persecutions of men. And he that once thought himself righteous beyond his fellows, having profited in the Jewish religion above many of his equals in his own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his fathers, is now brought down and so humbled, that we see him gladly classing himself with the worst of sinners; for, says he, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

Now, brethren, this is subjection to the gospel of Christ; and I know not that the Bible anywhere furnishes—I am not acquainted with any part of Scripture which contains—a more striking description and illustration of it than this. His character and feelings, before his conversion, were those of an educated and intellectual man; and need I say there are men who are distinguished by their ancestry, or their birth, or by their high station, whose religion is as limited as St. Paul's was before his conversion; consisting of outward observances, not thinking of them as they are—not to be religion itself, but only accessaries to it—not the principle of it, but important aids to it, as adjuncts to true religion, but not the thing itself; that they are the aliment, but not the life—the fuel, but not the flame. Now, if ever the gospel is to come home to those of elevated rank, and high station, and of great intellectual endowment, in the demonstration and with the power of the Spirit, they must abandon the opinion that they can understand it by the force of their own unaided powers, their intellect must be brought low; and if they would enter into the kingdom of heaven hereafter, they must account themselves as sinners; they must receive the kingdom of heaven as little children here, and be humbled into an entire subjection to the gospel of Christ.

Now, I ought not to have gone thus far in the discourse, my dear brethren, with-

out putting it to you whether you are personally acquainted with this process of humiliation and subjection to the gospel of Christ. In order that ye may judge of this matter aright between God and your own souls, permit me to make one or two observations upon it. And I will say, that if you have been carrying yourselves high in religion, then are your views of it low and defective. But if you have been carrying yourselves low, feeling your own insufficiency, and thinking that there is nothing good in yourselves, then are your views of religion high and scriptural. And have I not some among my hearers this evening, who, though they would be afraid so far to shake off religion as to make themselves easy without discharging the brief round of its stated forms; yea, perhaps, almost the whole body of ceremonies, yet wanting the soul of Scripture ordinances, and blending at the same time, with these forms, a faith quite of a piece with their practice; building their future expectations upon services, in which they make God but a merely nominal deity, while the real object of their worship is the world, which they are unwilling to resign for the Saviour; thus choosing to make a merit of their own, a propitiation of their own, and a righteousness of their own, and to incur the danger, and run the hazard of eternal punishment, by preferring the world, with its alluring temptations in the present scene, to the only solid source of real strength and everlasting peace. Then, in such a case—I trust there is no such a case in this church to-night—but, if there be, it furnishes an undoubted proof of utter ignorance of this "subjection to the gospel of Christ."

But if, on the contrary, I am addressing any this evening (and I know I am addressing some such) who are pursuing some of those various means which the Holy Spirit blesses in bringing his people to a knowledge of the truth—who see the corruptions of the world, and feel their unsubdued strength in their own hearts; and who are thus brought gradually to a real and lively faith in the Redeemer, from the love, if not of gross evil, at least from a life of worldliness and vanity, to

one of progressive piety; whose humility keeps pace with their progress, and who evince, by the change of their conduct, the great change which has taken place in their hearts; such are without doubt sincerely converted, and have been brought into subjection to the gospel of Christ.

But by what power has this been effected? How have these new principles of subjection been deposited in their hearts?—for it must be borne in mind that, throughout this discourse, we would be understood as speaking of subjection of heart—not merely of the body, for that is easily to be had. The body is often subjected, in many ordinances of religion, while the heart is still unmoved: men may be induced to attend the house of prayer, to bend the knee, to bow the head, and to give many external marks of subjection to the gospel of Christ; but how are they to be attached to religion; how are they to be humbled; how is one of them to be made to kiss the hand which chastens him, to bring him into the docility of a little child in spiritual things; how are we to make him love the God he professes to serve? Here is the difficulty. If you bring before him God's demand of satisfaction for his violated law, and that does not bring him into the subjection of which the text speaks; if you mention to him the righteous claims of justice, and that does not do it; if you spread before his mind the terrors of the day of judgment, with all the horrible and melancholy scenes attendant upon it, and that fails also; if you open, then, the gates of the black abyss of everlasting wo, and let him look in upon those unhappy victims whose transgressions have doomed them to everlasting burnings and pains, which know of no mitigation; if you let him hear those groans which there are ever heard, and see those tears which there are ever flowing; if you show him those hearts which are strung unceasingly to oaths, and curses, and horrid blasphemies; if you point him to those ever-thirsting and parched lips, to which nothing is ever presented but cups of burning gall: if all these will not subdue the man; if his affections are so corrupt, and his heart so perverse, that

he remains unmoved amidst all these manifestations of the results of that dire contest which is carried on between the thing formed and him that formed it—how is this man to be brought, what teaching is required that he may be brought, into subjection to the gospel of Christ? If the demands of God's law, the arena of judgment, and the tremendous severities of everlasting punishment, fail to bring down the high thoughts into captivity and obedience to Christ; if he is so constituted that he resists all these united efforts to break down the stronghold of sin which is in him, how is it to be done? It is only to be done by the powerful ministrations of God's holy word, through the Holy Spirit, who takes of the things that are Christ's, and shows them to his soul. This is, and must be, the power which alone can bring him into subjection to the gospel of Christ. It will never be done by himself, but only by that Spirit who first moved on the face of the waters, and made light and beauty to emerge out of the chaos of nature and her elements; and whose province it is, in the economy of grace, to repair the havoc which sin has made in it; he alone can restore the injured fabric to its original harmony. It is he alone who in his mercy, and by his grace, can create man anew to good works; he alone must make him again, after the image in which he was originally formed, and sanctify him again, by the faith that is in Jesus Christ; for subjection to the gospel of Christ is the work of God, and can be done only by the Spirit of God.

The interesting question then arises in the mind, How does the Spirit do it? We answer this question by remarking, that the Spirit subdues him wholly by showing him the misery of sin, and the mercy of the gospel of Christ; by letting him see how the Son of God descended from heaven for the purpose of taking the whole burden of offended justice upon himself, and to bear, in his own body, the weight of all our offences and transgressions; and, through the full and finished work of such an illustrious sufferer, pardon is now dispensed to the guiltiest, and grace to the vilest, of sinners. And only

give me the man who is brought to see God, with the eye of his mind, under this aspect, and you give me a man in whom the principle of enmity is destroyed; love is implanted in his heart, and his whole body, soul, and spirit, is brought into subjection to the gospel of Christ. Amid the failure of all other expedients, this is effectual: he whose heart remained unsoftened by the threats of God's vengeance, and proof against all the arrows of his violated law, as they fall into the citadel of his affections; he whose bosom was only filled with despair at the sight of the unhappy spirits in torment, and never felt any attachment in the midst of all these; he it is into whose heart the Spirit of God finds his way, breaking through all human opposition, and therein deposits the right principle of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, who died to subdue the poor sinner, and make him a new creature. And not one is there upon whom this glorious transformation has been wrought, who is not ready to ascribe his salvation to the triune Jehovah, to the Trinity in unity, and the unity in Trinity; to ascribe to God the Father all the glory of devising his salvation, to God the Son all the glory of accomplishing his salvation, and to God the Holy Spirit all the glory of imparting and applying that salvation to his soul.

And here let it be most solemnly and distinctly noted of this subjection, that where it exists, there will be some external proof of it; for what is felt in the heart must be heard from the lips, and be especially made prominent in the life. And this is the *third* point of our discourse, namely, that the text contains AN EXHIBITION OF CHRISTIAN PRACTICE—your *professed* subjection unto the gospel of Christ.

The original import of the text is not merely your *professed* subjection to the gospel of Christ, but your real subjection unto the gospel which is professed. There is, then, to be a profession of religion: there cannot be a more distinctive feature in our text than this, that every disciple of Jesus Christ is to hold forth the word of life, and to be a son of God without

rebuke, amid a crooked and perverse generation. We never maintain the doctrines of grace without, at the same time, contending for the grace of those doctrines; and if we say, as we do say, that the doctrines of grace must be in the head, we at the same time affirm, most unreservedly, that the grace of the doctrines must be in the heart, or else the weight of divinity in the head will only sink you deeper into the gulf of eternal perdition.

Now, I can readily conceive how happy some of my youthful auditors, who have learned this subjection, and who live in this crowded and increasing metropolis, how happy they would deem themselves if, having been brought into subjection to the gospel of Christ, and seeing the folly of all their former pursuits, and having thrown aside all those unprofitable and dangerous hooks which have been their former companions and counsellors, they could quit this busy scene. O, how happy, say they, should we be, if we could go and settle in some retired abode more favourable to the best ends of our being, where we might form our own plans, and be less enslaved by the despotism of custom, and less driven about by the absurd fluctuations of fashion, and where we could find ampler means of entirely consecrating our powers and faculties to the glory of Him whose we are, and whom we desire to serve. But allow me to tell those of my young friends who may be anxious for retirement, that it is not essential; that seclusion is by no means necessary to our salvation, nor is it essential to our growth in piety. If it had been; if retirement, if living in the country, if solitary communion with God had been all that was necessary, he would have appointed us to live in solitude rather than in communities: but the arrangement of Providence has ordered it otherwise; he has determined that we should live in communities, and not in solitude; and therein we are to hold forth the word of life, that every Christian, in a greater or less degree, may be like a city which is set upon a hill, and which cannot be hid, that the light within him may shine forth, so that men may see his good works, and glorify, not him, the

imperfect doer of those works, but his Father which is in heaven.

By far, perhaps, the greater part of the congregation now before me are not following out their Christian vows and resolutions in the society in which they move; perhaps some of them are placed in circumstances the most untoward for the cultivation of religious habits and feelings. Theirs are not those quiet scenes which are to be found in rural groves, or where they may sit beside murmuring rivulets, and indulge in all the rapturous feelings of silent meditation on the works of God around them; but they are doomed to dwell amidst noise and folly, and among men who know not God. Well! known to God are all his works from the beginning of the world. I can imagine your case, and the trials with which you have to contend; but be not discontented with your present untoward circumstances; be resigned to the will of God, who hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation. Wherever you go—and perhaps you are now just going out into life—at the command of God fly to the battle, and I charge you to remember your Captain; I charge ye, wherever ye go, and with whomsoever ye abide—I charge you, as I shall meet you again at the day of judgment, to remember your professed subjection to the gospel of Christ, that ye be influenced always by it, that the commandments, the truths, the laws of Christianity, may always have the supremacy in your affections; for know ye that your bodies must be temples of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God; ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price.

I beseech you, then, by the mercies of God, brethren, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service; “for herein,” said our Saviour, “is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.” Christ’s disciples are to be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God. Herein, then, exercise your-

selves; there is scarcely a text more worthy of being remembered, or more profitable, than this: “Herein exercise yourselves, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards man, that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God. You are not to forget that, “if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new.” And, finally, brethren, “whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things;” for it is by these things only, which are the fruit of the Spirit, that ye can be known.

There are three books in which every man’s character is faithfully recorded; the book of God’s remembrance, the book of the human heart, and the book of human life. Now, of these books, two are sealed against all human inspection; no man can read the book of God’s remembrance, no man can read the book—a most difficult book it is—the book of the human heart. But I charge you all, my dear brethren, to remember that the book of human life is always wide open, into which every one may look, and even the most unlettered have skill enough to read. Of this, then, be desirous, each and all of you, that your life should be an epistle known and read of all men: “Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.” “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works.” It is, perhaps, an error to suppose that you are to expend all your time and energy on the high and peculiar doctrines of the New Testament, and one against which I would caution those who are young in the divine life; you are not to expend all your warmth upon them, so that nothing but coldness and neglect is

left for the practical duties of the New Testament. You must cherish continually in your remembrance that uprightness in the outer man merges into and is co-existent with godliness of character in the inner man; when a new heart is given, a new life is always produced. No man can have the favour of God, if his life is not devoted to the service of God. We are never to forget that the virtues of society form as rich and varied an assemblage among believers as the virtues of the sanctuary; doctrines and duties, faith and works, are bound the one to the other by an indissoluble tie, so that we can never speak of Christian principle as the root, without speaking of Christian practice as growing out of that root, and inseparable from it.

Let every one of you, then, show your professed subjection to the gospel of Christ by your conduct and deportment in the world; do not lay aside your religion when you lay aside your Bible at the close of your morning prayer; but carry it abroad with you, and make it your companion, your guide, and your familiar friend throughout the whole business of the day; teaching you, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, you should live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in the present world. And let it encourage you to know that the gospel not only commands but promises to enable you to do this. If it had done the one without the other; if it had commanded, without enabling you, the Scripture would achieve but half its work; for we require not only inducements to lead a holy life, but a heart, a power, a will; assistance is as necessary as motives; power as indispensable as precept; and all these are not only promised in his word, but conferred by the Spirit of God. If ye will, then, brethren, be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, walk worthy of the vocation where-

with ye are called; for then only can ye give a sure and certain evidence of "your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ."

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THE FRENCH INFIDEL RECLAIMED.

My religious opinions have not always been the same as they are at present. Offended by the abuses of some institutions, and the vices of some men, I was formerly betrayed into declamation and sophistical arguments against Christianity. I might throw the blame upon my youth, upon the madness of the revolutionary times, and upon the company I kept: but I wish rather to condemn myself, for I do not know how to defend what is indefensible. I will only relate simply the manner in which Divine Providence was pleased to call me back to my duty.

My mother, after having been thrown, at seventy-two years of age, into a dungeon, where she was an eye-witness of the destruction of some of her children, expired at last upon a pallet, to which her misfortunes had reduced her. The remembrance of my errors diffused great bitterness over her last days. In her dying moments, she charged one of my sisters to call me back to that religion in which I had been brought up. My sister, faithful to her solemn trust, communicated to me the last request of my mother. When her letter reached me beyond the seas, far distant from my native country, my sister was no more; she had died in consequence of the rigours of her imprisonment. These two voices issuing from the tomb; this death, which served as the interpreter of death, struck me with irresistible force: I became a Christian. I did not yield, I allow, to great supernatural illuminations, but my conviction of the truth of Christianity sprung from the heart. I wept, and I believed.—*Chauteaubriand's Beauty of Christianity.*

## SERMON XLIII.

ON THE SIN OF BACKSLIDING

BY THE REV. T. LIEFCHILD.

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*“And it came to pass, as they sat at the table, that the word of the Lord came unto the prophet that brought him back: and he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord, and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee, but camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place, of the which the Lord did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcass shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers.”—1 Kings xiii. 20—22.*

THE prophecy which was denounced by the man of God, and which the subsequent part of the chapter records to have been fulfilled, is interwoven with the history of Israel's defection and the craftiness of Jeroboam. It is impossible to read the account of this man's tragical death, without being led by that to the preceding narrative respecting his conduct, and the revolt of the ten tribes under Jeroboam; and brief as that narrative is, and destitute as are the incidents, which contain no clothing or colouring whatever, it is most admonitory and instructing. An affecting truth forces itself upon us from every part of the narrative—that human nature is prone to go back from God, and that most of our follies and miseries into which we plunge ourselves, result from following the counsels of flesh and blood, in preference to those of faith and piety. Nations might be instructed from this narrative, but Christians alone can derive from it its full benefit. They learn from it how our nature in its best and renewed state is prone to backsliding—they learn from it, “to stand in awe and sin not,” and while “they think they stand, to take heed lest they fall.”

Go with me, for a short time, into a review of the general narrative, and favour me with a silent and prayerful attention,

otherwise I shall not be able to convey to you those sentiments, which I deem to be of importance, from this affecting and interesting relation.

It appears, then, that Jeroboam, whose name makes so conspicuous a figure in the whole of this history, and which name, occurring here, is ever afterwards stamped with reprobation in the book of God, was at first a Hebrew youth of fair promise and military talents. He was taken notice of by Solomon, who made him captain of his army; but Solomon declining into idolatry, this youth Jeroboam was brought forward in a way that was displeasing to him. He had heard that the prophet of God had taken a garment and rent it in twelve pieces, and had given Jeroboam ten pieces as a token, that ten out of the twelve tribes would take him to be their king, and only two other tribes, Judah and Benjamin, be left to Rehoboam, the son and successor of Solomon, and that merely to keep alive the name of David. Such was the dotage into which Solomon sunk—for idolatry corrupts and debases the powers of the mind as well as the affections of the heart—that he vainly thought he could frustrate this purpose of Heaven by the banishment of him who was its object. Jeroboam therefore, fled into Egypt, and there he continued till the death of

Solomon, when hearing of the murmurings of the ten tribes, he suddenly reappears amongst them. He is chosen by them to be their king, and away they all journey with him northward, and proceed from Bethel even unto Dan, of which they took possession; and between these two places, at Shechem, the court was set up. Now the carnal policy and ambitious ends of this new king begin to make their appearance. He commences turning to account the best means of securing the kingdom he had so suddenly gained; and this was his fault. Instead of reflecting on the end which Providence had in view in raising him to that elevation—whether to reprove the other tribes, or for some other purpose to be answered by this movement—he considered only how he might make the thing turn to his glory; he consulted only his own honour and aggrandizement, and the preservation and advancement of his kingdom; and all his following conduct proceeded on this corrupt principle. For it quickly occurred to him, while thus intent on his own glory, that unless some alteration was made in the religious customs and spiritual affections of the people, he would soon lose the advantages he had gained; because by the laws of Moses, the Jews, from all parts of Palestine, were compelled to go up three times a year to Jerusalem—at the feast of the Passover, the feast of Pentecost, and the feast of the Tables—there to appear before God. There Jeroboam thought they would see the temple of Solomon—there they would meet with some of their old companions among the two tribes, who would persuade them to come back—there they would see the sons of Aaron and the Levites, who would not fail to apply every touching and tender motive to induce them to come back—above all, they would see Rehoboam, sitting in state, and, perhaps, would reunite themselves to him, and his blood would be the cement of that reunion.

Now, what would have been the reasoning of piety in this case? It would have said, Why do I plague myself with these vain fears? If God means to keep these ten tribes distinct from the other

two, surely he is able to accomplish it, notwithstanding this mixture three times a year?—and if he does not, why should I wish to frustrate his purpose? I have only to be faithful to my trust. But he reasons just the reverse. I must reign—I must be king—I must have glory. I will, therefore, make an alteration in the customs of religion to serve that end. I will make religion itself a creature of the state—not destroy it altogether, but I will alter its customs and change its forms—not abolish the feasts, but change the times and the places where they shall be held. I will have two places of worship in this my kingdom. I will tell the people that they need not go up to Jerusalem, that God would not wish to fatigue them, and as the tabernacle changed its place of old, so may his worship. I will build two altars at each extremity of my kingdom; the one at Bethel, where God appeared to Jacob—and surely they will think that a suitable place of worship; and the other at Dan, where they have already an ephod, and teraphim, and priest, which they carried up from the house of Micah—which will seem another suitable place for public worship;—and as I have no golden altars, no ark of the covenant, no cherubim, no golden candlesticks, I will have two golden calves, such as I have seen them worship in Egypt, and I will persuade the people to accommodate our style of religion to theirs, that we may please them, and have them in alliance if it be necessary;—and as all the sons of Aaron and the Levites are gone up to Jerusalem, I will allow one of the remaining tribes to aspire to the honour of the priesthood, and will dignify the office by being myself the head priest. Thus I shall have both the church and the state completely under my control, and I shall be able to preserve the kingdom which I have so surprisingly obtained. In this manner he reasoned; and strange to say, all the children of Israel fell into the snare.

But it did not occur to the son of Nebat and the tribes of Israel, that in thus laying their sacrilegious hands on His institutions, profaning His worship, and making His glory to give way to

their carnal ambition, that they only trifled with the great God. What! do you not at once recollect, how your fathers made a vain attempt to introduce a golden calf into the worship of the true God, how they suffered for it, and how vengeance came upon them in the wilderness; so that they were slain by the sons of Levi, and the rest of them made to drink dirty water, rendered so by the powder of the consumed and broken idol? Is that gone out of your minds, chronicled as it has been in the catalogue of those dreadful judgments, which God has brought on your nation for idolatry? Have you not once recollected this? No, not once. They are so pleased with this proposal, and their hearts are already so far from God, that they all sanction it; they gather together at the altar of Bethel, and Jeroboam officiates as the head priest.

But what an awful event takes place! What an interruption in the assembly! There comes a prophet of God, a true prophet from Judah, running into the very midst of the multitude, having a message to deliver which he cannot withhold; and, undaunted by the vast company, he looks towards the altar and says, "O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord, Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burned upon thee. And as a sign of the truth of these my sayings, Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out." It all came to pass. Jeroboam sees himself insulted by this prophet—there is the altar—and all the people anxiously waiting for him to give the signal, that they may fall on this menacing prophet and tear him to pieces. He stretches out his arm to give the signal—but O, the wonderful power of God over those that rebel against him!—it is instantly seized with paralysis, and falls lifeless by his side. He knows now who is at work with him, and how vain it is to resist. Well, he humbles himself, confesses his sin, pulls down the altar, and reforms. No; he does go so far as to acknowledge that it is the true

God that punishes him, and to crave from him relief through the medium of the prophet; which being granted by the intercession of the man of God, he coldly offers him some meat and drink, and a present for his cure, as if the gifts of God could be purchased for money. On being told that he must not eat and drink in the place, that he must have no communion with the idolatry, and must go back another way from which he came, Jeroboam is quite content, and uses no further entreaty.

Hitherto we see this man acting faithfully, intrepidly, and covering himself with honour; but O, it is an affecting change that now takes place! He has got back to Jerusalem, at least he is on the road towards it, and he sits himself down under an oak tree to meditate on the circumstances of his most surprising mission—he thinks on the wickedness of the men profaning the worship of God—he thinks on the indignation of the true God against idolatry—on the singular preservation he himself has experienced from the vengeance of the idolaters—on the patience of God towards Jeroboam, whose malady had been healed at his intercession; and, perhaps, a little feeling of pride and self-elevation began to infuse itself at the thought of his being thus honoured. This paved the way for his fault. In that state of mind he was found by a false old prophet of Bethel, who had learnt from his sons what had taken place, and the road by which he was to return to Jerusalem. He shows him the greatest respect on account of his mission; he tells him he also was a prophet, and favoured with heavenly visions, though he resided at Bethel; and he entreats him to go back and take some refreshment. Here was the temptation. The man of Judah might easily have resisted it; he knew he had been prohibited from eating and drinking, but he did not know this was a true prophet; he had every reason to doubt it; he should have asked for his credentials, and in default of them he should have taken the surest course. But the temptation had got hold of him, and he was assisted by the inclinations of the flesh; he began to

be very hungry ; and therefore, he yielded to him, and went back, and took his seat at the table to enjoy a comfortable repast. But they had scarcely began the feast, when the false prophet rose up and said, "Thus saith the Lord, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord, and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee; but camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place of which the Lord did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcass shall not come to the sepulchre of thy fathers."

Now what would have been the duty of them both on the delivery of this message? Why, to have humbled themselves before God, to have confessed their sins—the one of seducing, and the other of being seduced—and to have entreated the Lord to put away their sin. Instead of which, they are thrown into confusion, they are unnerved by fear and alarm. The man of Judah especially, hastens out of the gate to his beast, and hurries away; but he hastens, without knowing it, to his ruin. A lion, moved less by hunger than by Providence, meets him on the road; and having destroyed him, instead of devouring his corpse, or the ass on which he rode, stands guard by him to protect him from the insults of all passers by, who might be ready now to jeer him, till the old false prophet, hearing of the event, comes to him, takes him back, and inters him with honours in his own sepulchre; and then the lion walks quietly away, proving that he was sent there by Providence. So that God showed that he honoured and respected his prophet, though he punished and chastised him for his disobedience. Then it is said, "After this thing Jeroboam returned not from his evil way, but made again of the lowest of the people priests of the high places; whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places. And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth."

Now the first thing that forces itself upon our attention from this narrative is,

#### THE SIN AND FOLLY OF SELF-SEEKING.

This it was that ruined Jeroboam. Instead of considering the end which Providence might have in view in his elevation, and how this might be answered, he thought only of his own glory and advantage. He gave way to this feeling; he made every thing subservient to this end; and, therefore, though one prophet gave him the kingdom, another came and warned him of the displeasure of God, and predicted his overthrow. Many mighty men since that period have been carried away by the same snare. They have been gifted with talents capable of benefiting mankind, and have been raised to important stations—they have had opportunities placed before them of being of the greatest advantage to their species, and of accomplishing some mighty work for God. For a while their end may have been single, they may have looked on themselves as the instruments of Providence, and may have considered what God had for them to do; but when they turned aside and began to seek their own glory, and fame, and honour in the world, from that moment their elevation was rendered useless, and all their honour was laid in the dust.

How happy are those men, whether in the church or state, whose lives proceed upon this principle, and under the influence of this inquiry—not what will keep me up? what will raise me higher? what will increase my fame? what will make me celebrated and looked up to?—but what are the ends Providence has most likely in view by my gifts, talents, and present station? how shall those ends be answered? how shall I best concur with Providence in the accomplishment of those ends? how shall my power be employed, so that those gracious and revealed ends of God shall be best answered in me? These men, acting under the influence of this principle, add honour to honour; by converting it to its noblest use you may look forward to honour even in eternity; while those who have turned aside to pursue their own selfish ends are deprived of the station which they once filled, are thrown by as useless instruments, and left to perish in disgrace.

O, my friends, there are many persons alive at this moment who sigh in vain after their former stations and opportunities of usefulness, of which, alas, they proved themselves unworthy, and which they never can recover! They are like a leaf torn off from a tree, where it might have been an ornament and have flourished, to wither on the ground, to be driven about by the winds, and to seek for some little hole or corner where they may perish in the midst of ignoble peace! Therefore, let all persons, especially the young, especially men of talent, men of influence, and men of high station,—let all such persons beware how they turn aside to seek after their own glory—how they make self the idol of their worship and regard—how they become warped and sinister in their views and designs, lest God Almighty should say to them, as Balak said to Baalam, “I thought to promote thee unto great honour, but lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honour? go to the obscurity from which thou camest, and from which thou ought never to have been raised—go get to that obscurity again, and perish there.” O, brethren, take care of self-seeking!

But that which forces itself more particularly upon us from this narrative, is THE VERITY AND PUNCTUALITY OF THE FULFILMENT OF THE DIVINE PREDICTIONS. The great difference between the oracles of God and the oracles of the devil is in the point of their clearness. The false predictions among the heathen were remarkable for their ambiguity; they were delivered in such a way as would suit almost any event, according as the wishes or fears of the superstitious parties concerned in them, might choose to interpret. Like that oracle which foretold that one of a certain family should be king first who embraced his mother, and when the youngest came to be king, it was found that he had fallen on the earth, and thus embraced his mother. Indeed there is a whole volume full of these predictions which were never fulfilled at all; but many of the predictions of Scripture as to the time, the person, and the place are definite and exact. In the case of the man of God before us, he not only fore-

told the person by whom that altar should be destroyed, his extraction and lineage, as coming from the house of Judah, but he foretold his very name two hundred and fifty years before he came into the world. It might have been thought that the prediction about this altar would have gone out of mind, but you read in the twenty-second chapter of the second book of Kings, that Josiah came down from Jerusalem, and viewing this altar, he ordered the bones of those who were in the sepulchres round about to be burned upon it, while he particularly spared the sepulchre of this man of God. Behold a proof of the omniscience of God, of the interference of his providence in all human affairs, and his faithfulness to his word! This is only one of many predictions of Scripture, relating to past events, which have been most literally and punctually fulfilled. But why do I mention this? Are there not predictions which Moses uttered respecting the Jews which are fulfilled and fulfilling before our eyes—predictions uttered by Isaiah, with respect to the destruction of Babylon—predictions by Jonah with respect to the destruction of Nineveh—and thousands of predictions by many others which have been punctually fulfilled?

My dear hearers, when you touch the sacred volume, you touch a most sacred and mysterious gift—a book sealed in the most solemn manner, by the predictions which have been fulfilled, as the book of God—and a book relating to you all, according to your characters, with respect to a future state. For what are all the promises and threatenings of Scripture respecting a future state to the children of men, according to their respective characters here, but so many divine predictions of those events? We shall die and go into our graves, but the word of God shall never die; there shall be a challenge made to all its predictions to bring them into fulfilment, and therefore we must be preserved in some other state to witness it, and to experience their truth. Suppose, for instance, you die in your sins, then you shall experience the truth of that prediction respecting the kingdom where Christ says you shall

never come. Suppose you die unholy, or go out of this world without regeneration—which is not an impossible thing; I am afraid, with regard to some of you, not a very unlikely thing because you are not regenerated now; it may be that the Holy Spirit of God shall never create your heart anew; it may be that your breath is but in your nostrils, and you are going you know not where—you will surely prove the truth of the predictions, that “without holiness, no man shall see the Lord,” and that “the unholy shall be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone.” On the other hand, suppose we die humble and penitent disciples of Christ, believers in him, doers of his word, and servants of his cause, then we shall experience the truth of those predictions where he says, his servants shall see the fruit of all their works and labours of love here, and hereafter shall have a glorious and eternal reward. Brethren, possess your souls of this truth; and when you read the Scriptures, think that you are reading the word by which you will be judged, and the appointment of your eternal doom regulated; and be assured, that as all the past predictions of Scripture, relative to events in this world, have literally and punctually come to pass, so all the predictions of this book relative to a future world, concerning us, according to our different characters, will also punctually, and to the very letter, come to pass.

You cannot but be affected from this narrative by **THE SIN AND AWFULNESS OF A BACKSLIDING STATE**. Here you see that an individual may be a man of God, may have a divine commission to execute, may execute it faithfully, and, after all, may yield to temptation and die the death. O, what an alteration a few hours may make in man’s character! What a revolution may be produced in his feelings! While the aspect of all things around him continues the same, what a difference may it wear to him from the change that has taken place within! How would this man of God, on going back the road from whence he had been decoyed, contrast his feelings then with what they had been before! On his first return he

rode along an approved servant of the living God, his conscience testified to his fidelity, the very trees seemed to applaud him for his faithfulness, and from the smiling aspect of all around him, it seemed as if all nature was in harmony with his feelings. But now he rode along an apostate, at least a backslider; and now every thing that he sees is painful to him, every thing seems to reproach him for his perfidy; and when he saw the oak under which he had sat, the recollection of the joyous feelings he had there experienced must have been painful by the contrast to his present emotions. There is not a passenger he meets as he goes along, but he is ready to think is acquainted with his perfidy; or if he makes him a salutation of respect, his heart reproaches him for not deserving it. And what must have been his feelings when he thought of his disobedience to his God, and the public reproof he had had for it—and, when it came to be known, how it would encourage idolaters to think slightly and to speak contemptuously of the true servants of God! After all, what was the gratification that allured him thus to cover himself with disgrace? It was a mere casual repast with a pretended servant of God.

See, brethren, **THE NECESSITY OF WATCHFULNESS AND OF BEING ON YOUR GUARD AGAINST TEMPTATION**. Perhaps some of you know what it is to have fallen by temptation, and to have experienced a miserable diversion of feeling—perhaps you have gone back from God, and the former light of a good conscience has been put out, and the place occupied by spectral terrors and fears. O, let us all take warning from these examples, and be not high-minded, for we know not how we may have to be tried—we know not how we may fall. I cannot tell but that in one hour I might through weakness disgrace my character, destroy the comfort of my conscience, and die dishonoured. O, when I think of those who are on dying beds without blemish or blot, I almost envy them—I almost envy those who are going into purity without having to incur the danger of another storm, or another rock: but for myself I

fear, and I would have you all to fear, not with the fear of dread, not with the fear of distrust of God, but with the fear of caution, with the fear of distrust of your own slippery, sliding, treacherous nature, which will be slippery, sliding, and treacherous to the last. "Blessed is the man who feareth always."

But there is a grand lesson yet to be taught us by this narrative, and that is, **THE PUNISHMENT THAT GOD BRINGS UPON HIS PEOPLE FOR THEIR SINS, WHILE THE WICKED ARE PERMITTED TO THRIVE AND PROSPER.** The sin of this man of God was one of weakness rather than viciousness. It was not at all to be compared to the sin of Jeroboam and the people; their sin was a deliberate contempt of God, a voluntary profanation of his worship; but his sin was a sudden fall, through temptation, from his steadfastness; it was a stepping aside from his usual course, to which he immediately returned; for as soon as he knew his sin he forsook it, and went back to the course he was pursuing; but they, though warned and threatened on account of their sin, still persisted in it to the utmost, and yet their punishment slumbered and tarried, but his comes upon him at once.

This is the principle of the divine conduct. In this sense, judgment begins at the house of God. You must not think that because you are the people of God, that your slips and miscarriages, your folly and guilt, will have no other punishment than an alteration in your feelings. Nay, you may be deeply humble and sincerely penitent, you may entreat God for mercy, and you may have reason to hope that you have found it, and that your sin will never come into judgment against you; but all that will not prevent you from some outward punishment—perhaps it may be the loss of character with all the advantages of usefulness—perhaps it may be some disorder in your body, or some distress in your family, and yet the wicked around you shall thrive and prosper. And why is this? The withholding it is the greatest punishment of all. God having warned sinners of their guilt and danger, and having given them some marks of his displea-

sure and vengeance, if he allow them to go on in their sin without any further affliction, without any further interposition or check, it is the greatest of all punishments; for this sin strengthens itself in them, the measure of their iniquity becomes full, and their eternal torments are increased.

O, Jeroboam, it was no mercy to thee, that thy arm was not withered again when sacrificing at the altar, and that no further judgment came upon thee, or upon thy people while they persisted in their unnatural rebellion, because, by that very means, every spark of goodness was left to explode from thy nature, and thy soul became as dry stubble, fit fuel for the everlasting burning! There is no punishment for sin more dreadful than itself—nothing more dreadful than to be delivered up to its power—there is no hell so dreadful as that being given over to sin. When God shall say, by suspending all correction and chastisement towards sinners—when he shall say, by the withdrawing of all means of correction, let them alone, let the drunkard be a drunkard still, let the profane person be a profane person still, let the filthy person be a filthy person still—I say, when God Almighty shall say that concerning a man, it is the most dreadful punishment of all. To be surrendered up to sin, to be under the fatal necessity of sinning throughout eternity, that is hell; and if ungodly men could interpret this matter aright, they would look on the pause which God is observing towards them, and which they are apt to think is the connivance of his providence at their evil deeds, as the most fearful prognostic; it would seem to them like that awful stillness, which nature sometimes feels while she is gathering for the discharge of a dreadful vengeance. O, may God punish me for sin in this life, however severe the punishment may be, extending to the loss of liberty, to the loss of character, to the loss of life, rather than let me see God without judgment, to fall asleep without judgment, and be delivered over to the power of sin in the eternal world.

I ought not to close this discourse without reminding you of **THE ONLY WAY**

BY WHICH YOU CAN OBTAIN DELIVERANCE FROM THE GUILT AND POWER OF SIN. Whether you have found little or much, whether you have been punished for it here or have not, there is only one way by which you can escape punishment for it hereafter, and that is, by having recourse to that mode which infinite goodness has pointed out—the mediation of Jesus Christ. He must be your surety, he must be your sacrifice, he must be your Saviour, or you cannot escape future punishment; for every one of us has a measure of iniquity which entails on us future punishment. If you are not interested in Christ, no partial excellence of your own, no comparative good in works of your own, can form any part of your security from future punishment; that must be the mediation of Christ alone. Unless you get there, you are never secure from future and eternal punishment; and, indeed, unless you get there, you can never perform any work at all acceptable to God. Unless you are accepted in Christ, you cannot receive the Spirit to purify your nature, and to make your works to proceed from right motives, and so be acceptable to God; but as long as you are strangers to Christ, not interested in Christ, every thing you do has on it that sin which renders it offensive to God. Your very repentance, in that state, needs to be repented of; your very tears for sin need to be washed; and the washing of your tears need to be steeped in the blood of the Redeemer.

You say this is not in the history, but it is in the gospel, and we are ministers of the New Testament; and although we think it our duty and privilege to bring before you the instructive histories of the Old Testament, (and where shall we find materials like them,) we dare not suffer this congregation to depart without informing them of the substance of the gos-

pel—that we can be saved only through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is more than probable that some of us may never meet again; and you ought not to be sent from the house of God without being faithfully apprized of this, that without a personal interest in the Lord Jesus Christ, eternity must come upon you with darkness and with horror.

O, my dear friends, think of this—you who have not thought of this before—you who flatter yourselves that you have time enough before you—you who think your health is firm and vigorous. Unless you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, there is no heaven for you, but the blackness of darkness for ever! O, that you would pray to the Lord to open your minds that you may receive this heaven! I preach unto you good tidings—I proclaim to you salvation from on high—I tell you of One who has worn your nature, and has bled and died on the cross for your salvation, and I tell you he is able and willing “to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him.” Why, then, do you delay—why refuse to make the application to him—why do you encourage yourself in that refusal—why do you think you cannot say to him, “Lord, have mercy upon me,” “Lord, save, or I perish”—why do you suppose that the Spirit of God will not come to you to assist your infirmities? O, brethren, delay no more—you have been spared to come into another year—you have not yet found an interest in Christ—still the door is open—still the voice of mercy comes unto you—still I am commissioned to say unto all, “Come, come, come!” but go away and refuse me, and then, perhaps, the voice that may succeed to mine may be, “Depart, depart, depart!”

“Come all the world, come sinner thou,  
All things in Christ are ready now.”

Amen.

## SERMON XLIV.

THE PRIVILEGES OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

BY THE REV. JABEZ BUNTING, D.D.

—  
“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”—Rom. viii. 17.

It is evident, from the very form and construction of this text, that it has an intimate connexion with something that has been stated in the preceding verse; this being to be regarded as an inference which the inspired writer would have us to draw from what he has there advanced.

In looking at those preceding verses, you will find that they contain a statement of two interesting particulars. First, they describe to us the exalted character of true believers in Christ. Of such, it is affirmed that they are the children of God, interested in his paternal love, assured of his paternal care, and authorized to expect from him every blessing which such a Father as he can bestow upon his people. The second thing stated in those verses has reference to the means whereby those who are thus become the children of God, are enabled to ascertain the fact of their right and title to that character. “The Spirit itself,” it is said—the divine Spirit—the Lord, the Spirit—the third person in that ever blessed and glorious Trinity, whom we worship and adore as one Jehovah,—“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.” Or, to use the parallel passage in Paul’s epistle to the Galatians, “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father,”—creating in us the comforting, tranquillizing, satisfying sense and persuasion, that God is our pardoning Father, and that we are his pardoned children, imboldening us to go to him with filial confidence and reliance,

and claim the exertion of his paternal love and power on our behalf, without fear of contradiction or repulse. “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit”—our conscience—“that we are the children of God.”

Now, in the text of this morning, the apostle goes on to describe the great and blessed privilege connected with this character: “If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” Let us consider,

*First*, THE PRIVILEGE ITSELF THUS DESCRIBED. *Secondly*, THE CONNEXION WHICH SUBSISTS BETWEEN IT AND OUR RELATION TO GOD AS HIS CHILDREN. *Thirdly*, THE TERMS ON WHICH OUR FINAL AND PERSONAL ENJOYMENT OF THE PRIVILEGE, IN ALL ITS FULNESS, IS MADE TO DEPEND.

*First*, Let us turn our attention to the statement here given, OF THE PRIVILEGE OF GOD’S CHILDREN. It is said, they are “heirs of God”—“joint-heirs with Christ”—and shall be also “glorified together” with him.

In general terms, the children of God are here represented as “heirs.” As the law of nature, and the institutions of civilized society, authorize children to expect the ultimate possession of property which once belonged to their parents, so God, condescending to stand towards his pardoned people in the relation of a Father, has pledged himself that he will act to them the part of a Father, and is not ashamed to call himself their God, be-

cause he has prepared for them a city, and provided for them a rich inheritance. "O, how great," says the psalmist, "is the goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee!" There is great goodness, which, in reference to God's people, is—not laid up, but, if we may so speak—laid out upon them, of which they are, in the present world, the happy partakers. They would faint, if they did not see the goodness of God in the land of the living. But besides the goodness which they now partake, there is still greater goodness laid up for them, reserved for another and a future state; and it is in reference to this that they are designated as heirs.

More particularly, they are said to be "heirs of God." God is the portion of his people—God is the lot of their inheritance. Looked at with the eye of sense, it might seem that, generally speaking, the inheritance of truly devoted and holy people in this world, is not much to be envied; it might seem that they were in general only heirs of poverty, of shame, of reproach, of misrepresentation, of opposition, of persecution. This appears to be their inheritance to those who only judge superficially; but, in reality, whatever be their outward lot, however full of privation or suffering, they are all the while heirs of God, richer than the richest, and greater than the greatest, of those who are rich and great only for this world.

They may be said to be heirs of God even at present, inasmuch as they are entitled, by virtue of his covenant, "well ordered in all things, and sure," to as much of what God is, and as much as of what God has, as shall at any time be requisite for their welfare and their security. Thus they are heirs of the Divine holiness, as far as the communication of it may be needful to prepare them for holy duties, and to make them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. They are heirs of the Divine wisdom, as far as the guidance of it may be requisite for their safe conduct through this wilderness world to the heavenly kingdom. They are heirs of the Divine omnipotence, as far as the exertion of that power may

be deemed necessary by Him who wields it, to preserve them from real danger, and to secure for them every actual good. In this sense, even now, believers, God's pardoned people, are heirs of God; they have a right to God, they have an interest in God; all is theirs, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come—all is theirs; for they are Christ's, and Christ is God's, and God in Christ is their God, their own God and Saviour, for ever and ever.

As we before intimated, it is not in reference to any enjoyment or privilege of religion, that the people of God are designated heirs, so much as in reference to what is future; those blessings which are not yet in possession, but only in reversion, are the blessings which, in strictness of speech, constitute their inheritance. Of this future inheritance, we have various but agreeing accounts in Scripture. By one apostle it is represented to us as "an inheritance among them that are sanctified;" which expression we consider, not merely as teaching that none but sanctified and holy people will be allowed to partake of the blessedness of heaven, but also that heaven itself implies, and will confer on those who are admitted into it, a much higher degree of holiness than they before attained. In that world our conformity to God will be more exact and striking, our resemblance of him more accurate and complete.

In another place, speaking of this future inheritance of saints, it is described as "an inheritance of the saints in light;" which phrase must, in like manner, be considered as teaching us that in heaven we shall receive a great addition to our knowledge, as well as to our purity. You know now but in part, and see but in part. We who are now compelled to behold many highly interesting objects of contemplation but as through a glass, and therefore darkly, shall then see as we are seen, and know as we are known.

The apostle Peter presents this inheritance in a somewhat different aspect in reference to its safety and perpetuity; he calls it "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved

in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." The circumstances of earthly parents may be suddenly reversed; they may be reduced to poverty, and their children therefore deprived of the inheritance which, at one time, they had good reason to expect. But the passage just quoted from Peter, tells us that the children of God have nothing to apprehend from reverses; those changes and vicissitudes which attach to all earthly things attach not to them, in reference to their spiritual and eternal prospects; theirs is an inheritance "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven," the world which knows no change, "for them who are kept by the power of God, through faith."

All those ideas respecting heaven, and many more which are to be found in various parts of the sacred writings, are, in the text of this morning, epitomized and summed up, as it were, in one word; and that one word is comprehensive of every thing great and good, of every thing desirable and glorious; that one word includes every thing that man can wish, and every thing that God can give; they are "heirs of God." God shall be, in heaven, fully and perfectly his people's portion; they shall there have the complete and uninterrupted fruition of God. This is saying every thing in the world; for more than this God cannot promise—more than himself God cannot give. This is what will add intensity and sweetness to every other enjoyment of paradise; this is that which will make the whole complete and perfect—that there we shall see God as he is, that there we shall be satisfied when we awake with the likeness of God, that there we shall behold Jesus, the Sun of righteousness, that there we shall be for ever filled with all the fulness of God.

Further particulars concerning this privilege of God's pardoned children are included in the phrase "joint-heirs with Christ," and "glorified together" with him. These expressions, taken in conjunction, teach us, first, *that we are altogether indebted to Christ, and to God's*

*mercy, in and through Christ, for our title to the inheritance of heaven.* Heaven is a purchased possession: but how purchased? Not by the tears or prayers, not by the penitence or faith, not by the holiness or usefulness, not by the suffering or the dying of those who shall enjoy it; but by the precious blood of Christ. As that was the price of our soul's redemption, so it was the price paid for the recovery to us, and on our behalf, of our forfeited inheritance of glory. If we be heirs, it is not by any title of our own; it is in Christ's right; it is by virtue of Christ's title, mercifully conveyed to us, on God's part, upon our humble and penitent act of faith in Christ.

These expressions also teach us, secondly, that *the title of true believers to heaven is in the highest degree valid and satisfactory.* This must be so, if it be, as we have stated, none other than Christ's title made over to us. His title is unquestionable; what he hath amply merited by his obedience unto death, he hath a certain and manifest right freely to bestow upon whomsoever he will; and he wills to bestow upon all pardoned, regenerated, obedient believers. Of these he says, "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." If, then, Christ's title be unimpeachable, ours, which is a share in his, is equally valid.

There are, indeed, differences between Christ's title to heaven and the title of believers. His is an original title, earned by himself; ours is a borrowed title, derived from him, the result of his free gift to us. His title to heaven is one actually recognised, already pleaded and sued out; he has put in his claim in his glorified human nature, and in his character as Mediator, as Jesus the once crucified, for the inheritance of glory, and that claim has been allowed; he is in possession of the inheritance; he has actually sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having by himself first purged our sins; whereas we are but on our way to that glory. But even in this there is comfort for the sincere and true believer; for the ascension of Christ into heaven was not a personal and individual

act, terminating in itself alone, concerning none but himself; it was a public, official, and mediatorial act; he as truly ascended for us as he died for us, and rose again for us; and because he liveth, we, if we follow him in the regeneration, shall live also.

Thirdly, these expressions, "joint-heirs with Christ," and "glorified together," teach us, that *there shall be a blessed similarity in point of nature*—though, of course, an infinite disparity in point of measure and degree—*between the enjoyment of Christ in heaven and the enjoyment of his glorified people there.* "Joint-heirs with Christ;" that is, not heirs under a similar title, but heirs of what shall be substantially one and the same inheritance. "Glorified together" with him: so he himself says in his last intercessory prayer—"The glory," the identical, substantial, essential glory, "which thou, Father, givest me, I have given them." Like Christ himself, in a future state, believers will be admitted to a most intimate oneness with the Father; their bodies in the morning of the resurrection shall be raised up from the dust of the earth, and be changed and "fashioned like unto his glorions body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself."

Moreover, we learn from Scripture that it is a part of the mediatorial glory of Christ, that, in recompense and public approbation of his previous voluntary humiliation, and suffering, and sacrifice, he is now, even in his human nature, highly exalted. Because, when he was in the form of God, and counted it no robbery to be equal with God, he made himself of no reputation, but was found in fashion as a man, assumed the form of a servant, and emptied himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross: therefore, God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name, and hath decreed that "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow"—sooner or later, either in prayer to entreat and accept his mercy, or in judgment to receive the sentence of his wrath—"and that every tongue shall confess," voluntarily, or by compulsion,

"that Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Now, in this mediatorial glory, the recompense of his mediatorial condescension, and suffering, and sacrifice, his saved people shall largely participate.

Such is the identity which he has condescended to establish between their interest and his own, between their happiness and his, between their glory and exaltation and his. As he gave up all for their sakes when he became man, and suffered and died, so, now that he has received the fulness of mediatorial recompense, he will share it all with them, and will not have it to himself; his glory shall be reflected in all his members, and they shall shine illustriously in his sight. Hence such passages of Scripture as the following:—"The wise shall inherit glory"—exaltation, dignity; not merely bliss, but glory too. "The upright shall have dominion;" not merely safety, deliverance from wrath and condemnation, but dominion. "The upright shall have dominion in the morning." "Know ye not," says the apostle, "that the saints shall judge the world?"—that world which often now so uncharitably and malignantly judges them. "Know ye not that the saints shall judge angels?"—and especially that fallen angel, the chief of the apostate legion, who was, in their case, while they toiled and travelled on earth, the accuser of the brethren, and harassed them by so many temptations. They shall have a noble triumph by and by. Then, there is that striking passage, which I know not how to explain—which seems to hold out to us something of which we can just catch a glimpse, sufficient to satisfy us that it is most glorious and most astonishing, but being seen only in the distance, we cannot accurately define it: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." What does that mean—to sit down with Christ on his throne? We are accustomed very properly to delight ourselves with the idea of taking our places at his feet, lost in wonder, love, and praise: but we are told that this is not his pleasure, however

much it might be our gratification, our duty, if he admit of it, and our joy. We shall not be permitted to dwell at his feet; it is his determination and arrangement that those who overcome, like him, shall sit on the throne with him. This is not the manner of man, O Lord God! When earthly sovereigns design to manifest their special regard for any of their subjects, or to recompense peculiar services rendered, they bestow upon them titles, and honours, and dignities, and perhaps estates; but not one of them ever thought of raising such a favoured subject to his throne, and making him the partner of his crown. The maxim acted upon on all such occasions, is that on which Pharaoh acted in the case of Joseph: "Only," said he, "in the throne will I be greater than thou." But mark the condescension of your Saviour: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne." Thus, then, there is an identity of glory, as it respects essence and nature, between Christ in his kingdom and his people, when permitted to enter that kingdom: they are "joint-heirs" with him; they shall be "glorified together" with him.

Mark, then, in the *second* place, THE CONNEXION BETWEEN THIS PRIVILEGE AND OUR RELATION TO GOD AS HIS CHILDREN. "If children, then heirs." This, of course, implies that *none but children* will be recognised as heirs, or be allowed to inherit. It is the relation that gives the right; and where the relation has not been established, the right cannot be pleaded. As for those who continue in their natural state of alienation from God, who continue to be what they are by nature, and as we are all by nature children of wrath, dead in trespasses and sins; as for those who never come to God in the way the gospel prescribes, by a penitent renunciation of sin, and a hearty acceptance of Christ as the only and all-sufficient Saviour; these, remaining out of the family, belonging to the synagogue of Satan, will not be allowed to take their part in the inheritance of children. God will not take the children's inheritance any more than the children's

bread, and give it to those who remain what they always were — aliens and outcasts.

It is true, God may and does bestow, even on those who are not his children, in the spiritual sense of the term, various tokens of providential care, and instances of providential bounty. It may so happen that to some of these he gives a very large measure of the good things of this life; he leaves not himself "without witness, in that he does good, and gives us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." But whatever be the portion he may thus assign to the impenitent and unbelieving in the present state of things, they have no part or lot in the inheritance of his people: from that they are excluded while they remain in impenitence, in unbelief: the interdict, while that state of mind continues, is absolute and peremptory. Just as, in the book of Genesis, we read that, on one occasion, Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac; that is, he constituted Isaac, solemnly and officially, his heir; acknowledged him as the son who was to abide in the house ever: and yet it is said in the very same passage, that Abraham gave certain inferior presents to his other children; but it is added, that he sent them away, as they were not allowed to abide in the house as children and heirs: they had no permanent station there.

Tremble, those of you, my hearers, whose consciences tell you that you are not children and heirs of God,—that you have hitherto sadly neglected this great salvation; tremble, lest, after all the good things of this life, which Providence may have poured into your lap, it should ultimately be your lot to be sent away, to be commanded to depart accursed from God's own house! None but children are heirs.

Now, this expression implies, too, that *all children* are heirs:—"If children, then," of course, "heirs." This does not always take place in the arrangements of human society. It often happens that the estates and dignities of the great of this world descend exclusively to the

male children, or to the eldest branch of the family—nearly, or comparatively, to the exclusion of the rest; but this is not the rule which almighty God will adopt in the distribution of the heavenly inheritance. “If children”—it matters not whether sons or daughters of the Almighty—“if children, then heirs.” It is true there are peculiar honours which shall be bestowed upon Christians—the first-fruits, the elder brother of the family; but similar, though not equal honours are in store for all who shall be Christ’s at his coming.

Nor will this inheritance of heaven lose any part of its value from being distributed among so many. As on earth the people of God are companions in the patience and tribulation of Jesus, and have sympathy with each other in temptations, and persecutions, and reproaches, so in heaven they shall have delightful sympathy with each other’s enjoyments, and be companions in the kingdom and glory of that state. Every man in heaven will feel himself much the happier, because he will know there are so many millions of ransomed and purified spirits who share the same bliss. Thus, in a blessed sense, each will inherit all things; every man will have personally, or by sympathetic enjoyment, the fruition of all heaven.

In the *third* place, the text leads us to notice THE WAY IN WHICH WE ARE TO WALK SO AS TO SECURE THE ACTUAL BESTOWMENT OF THIS PRIVILEGE:—“If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”

First of all, we are to take care that, to become children, we are to apply to God in the way of penitence and faith in Christ crucified, that our sentence of alienation and estrangement may be reversed; that we may be freely justified by grace, and accounted righteous for the sake of Jesus Christ the righteous, and thereby become the objects of God’s gracious adoption. But if children, we are not to conclude that there is no further need of watchfulness or prayer. We are to remember the other clause:—“If so be that we”—we who are his children, we who have been

brought into his family, we who have passed from death unto life—“if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”

When, in the text, or in any other part of Scripture, the saints of God are represented as suffering with Christ, none of you can for a moment imagine that the suffering of the saints are, like those of Christ, meritorious in their nature, or capable of expiating sin. For such a purpose as that, all the sufferings of all the saints that ever lived, with those of the noble army of martyrs at the head of the list, would be found utterly inadequate. The redemption of the soul is too precious to be accomplished by any combination of creature doing or creature suffering whatsoever: and for such a purpose as that of atoning for sin, or meriting eternal life, the sufferings of the saints are not needed: Christ hath by himself once purged our sins; his work of atonement on the cross was so complete and perfect, when he poured out his innocent soul; when he cried, “It is finished,” and gave up the ghost, that, in point of merit, nothing can by possibility be added to it.

We often hear of “finished salvation.” It is a phrase in much use in some sections of the religious world; and it is a phrase to which a very good sense may be attached; but it is not a scriptural phrase, and it may be abused; it may be misunderstood. There is reason to fear, lest some talk so much about finished salvation as to forget that they are to “work out their own salvation with fear and trembling,” while it is “God that worketh in them to will and to do of his good pleasure.” But if all that be meant by it is “finished atonement,” then it is a sound and scriptural phrase. It was to the atonement to which our Saviour alluded, when, as he gave up the ghost, he cried, “It is finished!” It was not the salvation which was to be finished by the atonement, but the payment of the price that was to purchase salvation for all that should believe. But with regard to salvation, it is to be feared that, as to many of us, it has not yet begun: it

Is a question whether all who hear me have any very serious or abiding conviction of their need of salvation; it is a question whether there be not in this, and in every other congregation—or rather it is no question, for we talk no compliments here—there is no doubt that many here have not yet begun even to seek salvation. How, then, should salvation be finished? But there is an atonement which authorizes this seeking salvation; and if you come by penitence and faith, and plead that finished atonement, then you shall be saved. “He that believeth shall be saved.”

But, though the sufferings of the saints are not in their nature expiatory or meritorious, in any degree or sense, they may be fitly termed, “suffering with Christ;” first, *because a large portion of the lot of suffering which falls to the lot of good people in this world, comes upon them in consequence of their adherence to Christ*—in consequence of their devotedness to the truth, and cause, and service of Christ. Yes; if we would forsake Christ, and sell our souls to perdition for a mess of this world’s pottage, we might escape much suffering, much inconvenience. We should then escape much of *the world’s reproach*. I am quite aware that men of the world, who are in the habit of venting their scorn on the professors of religion, wish it to be understood that their hostility is not directed against religion, but against what they call the faults, and follies, and inconsistencies of professors—and much is it to be lamented that professors of religion should ever afford colour for such a pretext. But, after all, it is a mere pretext, a mere excuse; it is not the inconsistency of religious persons that provokes the world’s hostility, it is the religion itself: they dislike them, not because they have too little religion, but because they have a little too much for their own taste. This is plain from the fact, that in men of their own worldly character and spirit, they will pardon, they will even palliate and defend inconsistencies and faults a thousand times more glaring and disgusting than any of those which they allege against the professors of religion. If we would go over

to the world’s side, it is plain we should escape many of its reproaches; “the world would love its own,” as our Saviour said. Those with whom it cannot compromise—those who keep no terms with it—those who come out from among the wicked and the worldly, and arrange themselves heartily and solemnly on Christ’s side—these are the persons whom the world hates; but the world will love its own.

It is likewise plain we might escape much suffering by abandoning Christ and Christianity, and the holiness that belongs to it, inasmuch as we should escape a large part of that class of suffering which comes under the head of *temptation from Satan*. Our Saviour describes the great adversary of men as “a strong man armed, keeping his goods in peace.” When Satan can reckon upon men as his goods, people who devote themselves to him, and listen to his unholy suggestions, and follow his beck and command, they are his goods; he keeps them at peace. His object is to keep them quiet; to set them to any folly, to any gayety, that will keep them from thinking, or that might tend to disturb their conscience. That is Satan’s policy with respect to his goods. But when men are no longer his goods—when they give themselves to God in Christ—when they set themselves to resist evil—when the struggle commences on their part, heartily and earnestly between subserviency to sin and devotedness to God, with an earnest desire to be delivered from Satanic power,—then his object is, not to keep them at peace, but to harass, and annoy, and alarm them, by various, and severe, and powerful temptations; so that, for a time, if they be new beginners in religion, they are ready to imagine that they were more happy and comfortable before they sought religion than they have been since—so severe, for a time, is the power of temptation.

We should escape, too, all that class of suffering which comes under the head of *self-denial*. This is a Christian duty not to be overlooked or superseded. “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.” The flesh must be mortified, beset-

ting sins must be resisted—sometimes the right hand must be cut off, and the right eye plucked out, in order to avoid occasions of sin against God. And all this is painful work to nature: it costs true Christians some suffering to practise self-denial.

If we would abandon Christ and religion, we might possibly escape some *providential sufferings* that come upon us. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." It is too possible to get into such a state of mind by long continued neglect of God, by obstinately grieving and quenching his Holy Spirit, as to become judicially hardened. It is possible so to provoke God, by obstinate and long continued unfaithfulness, in the midst of outward profession, as that he shall take his Holy Spirit from us, and cease to ply us with the discipline of his providence, and say, "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." There are those whom God, in his judgments, gives up to a worldly, and reprobate, and backsliding spirit.

But whatever be the nature of our sufferings, it may be called suffering with Christ for another reason—if *it be endured in the temper and spirit of Christ*. When, forasmuch as Christ suffered for us in the flesh, we are found arming ourselves with the same patient mind—when, after his example, being defamed, we entreat—when we bless them who curse us, pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us, and render good for evil—when, in the midst of complicated trials and chastenings of Providence, we say, as Christ said, "Not my will, but thine be done,"—"The cup which my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it?" We then suffer with Christ, in his Spirit, and after his example.

It is not hard or unreasonable that we should thus be required to suffer with Christ, in order to be glorified together with him. It is not hard or unreasonable, because it is with Christ that we suffer—he suffered before us—preceded us in the path of temptation, and self-denial, and trial; he demands nothing from us that he has not already, in an infinitely higher

degree, practised himself for our sakes. The servant is not above his lord. Is it not enough for every reasonable servant to suffer as his master suffers? Ought the private soldier to complain of privations or perils to which his general submits? Where our Captain bravely leads, ought we not resolutely to follow? Did not our Master first suffer, and then enter into his glory? And what right have we to demand that, for our pleasure, a contrary order should be established, and that we should enter into glory without suffering? Are not believers predestinated, as St. Paul tells the Romans, to be conformed to the image of God's Son? And does not that intend the image of his suffering in a state of humiliation, as well as the image of his holiness?

Suffering Christians, think that it is with Christ you suffer, and the thought will reconcile you to suffering; you will feel it an honour to be in any respect conformed to such a Head. There are many whose salvation is in danger, and likely to be finally prevented, on this very ground, that they have not the heart to suffer with Christ. But who would not thus suffer? Why, none but a believer—none but a man in whom is the faith that overcometh the world—none but a man who has that new principle of life which is created by the love of God and of Christ shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. All who are destitute of this, when they are brought to this point, will uniformly say, "I pray thee, have me excused;" and will decline to suffer with Christ: they do not love him well enough to appreciate the honour of being like him in his sufferings.

It is not hard or unreasonable that we suffer with Christ before we are glorified, because the subsequent glory will far more than compensate the previous suffering. This is the apostle's own argument, in the verse which follows the text: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." "For I reckon"—mark the principles of this computation, which St. Paul has recorded for our instruction.

The accuracy of his reckoning may be justified, if we even consider nothing but the actual sufferings and the actual glory, without reference to the question of duration. What I mean is this:—Supposing it were the will and pleasure of God, after granting you his grace, and bringing you into his family, and making you his children, that you should live in a world of temptation and trial, bearing your cross, fighting with contumely, and meeting with reproach, for a period of threescore years and ten; and supposing that, at the end of that period, he were to say, in his mercy, “It is enough—come up hither; thou shalt suffer and sigh no more”—and were to admit you into his glory, and that you were to live in the enjoyment of that glory only for a limited period, only for a period answerable to the threescore years and ten, which you had previously spent on earth, and were then to be annihilated, to have your bliss and your being extinguished, never to live, or think, or be happy again; even then, it would be infinitely worth a man’s while to be a saint on earth, in order to be a saint for a short, and transient, and terminating heaven. One moment spent in that state, the vision of Christ on his throne, and God in his glory, would more than make amends for all the trials, and temptations, and self-denials, of a long, long life on earth.

But St. Paul did take into his reckoning the element of duration; this was an item in his reckoning of great importance. He tells us expressly, “The sufferings of this present time”—this short life—“are but for a moment;” whereas, “the glory that is to be revealed,” is glory that shall never terminate—glory that shall last as long as God shall live—glory that shall be perpetual. The coming glory will infinitely more than counterbalance the previous sufferings, both in point of abstract amount and of duration. Then, it is not hard, it is not any thing of which we have a right to complain, in the arrangements of Christ and of his gospel, that he demands of his people, on whom he bestows so much, for whom he has done and suffered so much, that they should be willing to suffer with him, and, in the

way of the cross, should follow him to the attainment of the crown.

We learn, from this subject, *the extreme desirableness and importance of being found among the pardoned and regenerated people of God.* O, what a blessing, according to the text, to be a child and an heir of God! “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!” And we are not only called his sons, but treated as his sons; we have not only the honourable title, but the substantial advantage of the inheritance. Is it not supremely delightful to be a child and heir of God? My hearers, is that your opinion—the fixed sentiment of your mind and heart? Put that question, I beseech you, to yourselves; because every thing depends upon it. Do you supremely, beyond every thing else, desire to be a child and heir of God? Can you say,

“Worldly good I do not want;  
Be that to others given;  
Only for thy love I pant;  
My all in earth and heaven!  
This is the crown I fain would seize,  
The good wherewith I would be blest;  
Jesus, Master, seal my peace,  
And take me to thy breast.”

If you can honestly say, “We do, above all other things, desire to be children of God,” then behold, I bring you glad tidings; God desires it; God and you are of a mind; God desired it long before you did, and made provision for it long before you drew your breath; and ever since you have been inhabitants of this world, and capable of thinking and distinguishing between good and evil, almighty God has been using various methods of providence and grace, to make you willing to become his children,—to draw you out of your state of estrangement and forgetfulness of him, and to bring you into his family, that you might be numbered with his saints in glory everlasting. While you were careless of these things, God was thinking of you, and caring for you, and saying, in his fatherly affection for you, “How shall I put them among the children? What can I do to bring them to a better

mind?" And has he succeeded? Has his grace at last triumphed over the obstinacy of your resistance? Do you now consent to be saved by his mercy through Christ? Then there is no hindrance to your present salvation. Arise—why tarriest thou? Wash away thy sins, by an act of present faith in the present Saviour, calling on the name of the Lord Jesus. Venture upon the merit of that great atonement; dare to trust thy soul in the hands of Jesus: if he holds thee up, thou shalt be safe; and he will hold thee up, if thou wilt but cast thyself without hesitation into his hands. To as many as receive Christ, to them gives he power, privilege to become the sons of God, even to as many as believe on his name. If, then, you are willing to be children of God, supremely desirous of it, and will receive Christ, and renounce your own wisdom, and righteousness, and strength, and take Christ to be unto you wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption—if you simply receive Christ as God offers him to you, you will stretch out your hands to receive the divine fulness which is offered to you in Christ. You need not wait till tomorrow, or next year, to become the sons of God: receive Christ, and the moment you do so, God, for Christ's sake, will receive you; he will give you right and prerogative, according to the economy of his gospel, to become, in that happy moment, the sons of God, and heirs of glory.

Many of you have realized these privileges; you are children and heirs of God. Is it so? Then, *be thankful*. "O, God, thou art my God!" said one: well, what then? "I will praise thee—I will exalt thee." If you have been called out of the world, and made happy heirs of God, you are not to give yourselves high airs and haughty looks on that account; you are not to carry your heads high, and look on yourselves with complacency, think you are some great one, and to say to others who are yet in the world, "Stand aside." That would be exalting yourselves;—whereas, the business of a pardoned man is to exalt God. The Lord alone will be exalted in that day when he takes a man

from among the pots, and puts him among the princes of his people.

Are you children and heirs of God?—Then, *be submissive to your worldly lot*. Though it may not be in all respects such as your nature would innocently desire; though it may be connected with many occasional hardships, and sorrows, and privations, yet be content with your lot: you are sons and heirs of God, and does not that make amends for all?

Are you children and heirs of God?—Then, *be consistent, be heavenly minded*. Let your conversation be in heaven, whence also you look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, and where you hope soon to overtake the Saviour. O, grovel not here below, fond of these earthly toys! Christians, take care of your hearts, especially in these times, when so many things are continually occurring which are apt to absorb you; do not forget that your principal business is with heaven. If you are what you profess to be—children and heirs of God—you will soon discover how paltry, in comparison with these high and ennobling objects, are all the vanities of earth. Do your duty in the world and to the world, to the utmost of your power, according to Christian rules; but remember, you are only passing through it; do not suffer your hearts to be in it. You are pilgrims and strangers here; keep up the spirit of pilgrims; leave the potsherds of the earth to be absorbed and intoxicated with things of earth. It does not become you, Christians, to cherish undue anxieties or eagerness about things below. Do your duty to the world, in whatever station of life it may please God to call you; but, then, pass on; let your affections be upward and heavenward.

Finally, *remember what God requires of you, in order to your being glorified—that you should suffer with him*. You cannot escape this: if you are faithful and holy, it will find you out in one form or another. "God did tempt Abraham." What does that mean? Not that God solicited Abraham in any way to an act of disobedience; but God did try him, put him to the test. God put Abraham, in his providence, into such circumstances,

to sift what was foremost in his heart; whether he loved God or Isaac most. That is the sense in which he tempted him: and he nobly stood the trial, and came out as gold purified, more illustrious and more brilliant in his character than ever.

In the same sense God will tempt you. If you become God's children and servants, you must expect to have your religion put to the test; God will bring you into such circumstances, as that you must really make your choice and decide, and show what you are, and what is the substance and texture of your religion. I believe there is one great crisis of this sort in every man's life—in many men's lives more than one—where God so places them in circumstances as to call forth their true character, that they must show their colours and must make their choice. And, O, in such a course to stand—and having done all, to stand! To prefer Christ, and conscience, and heaven, to all the most tempting forms of earthly allurements that can assail us! How noble! How honourable to God and advantageous to ourselves! God never suffers such fidelity to pass without bestowing some special marks of his favour, some peculiar token of his grace. What will be your particular form of trial, God alone can tell: he will settle it well and wisely; he will give the due and necessary consideration to your individual infirmity. "There bath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it:" but still it will be a temptation; you will be put to the test. For instance a Christian man, after being in circumstances of worldly difficulty, may have some offer of employment, some lucrative situation, some gainful business, which seems the very thing to relieve him from all restraints, and to enable him to provide as he wishes for himself and family; but then he finds, that in order to accept and to prosecute this calling, he must offend God, he must give up some religious principle; he must

violate, it may be, the sanctity of the Lord's day. That is the day of that man's trial: God is putting him to the test, as he did Abraham, to see whether the man has conscience and religion enough to make any sacrifice of apparent worldly interest for the sake of pleasing God. And if the man stand the trial, and prefer God's fear to every thing else, there shall be a special care over him from that very time.

In one way or other we must prepare ourselves to suffer with Christ. Let us pray that we may have suffering grace for a suffering time; that we may have Christian courage to resist evil, to fight the good fight of faith, as valiant soldiers ought, and so lay hold on eternal life, ever setting it down with ourselves as a maxim to guide our conduct, to prefer the greatest suffering to the smallest sin. Of two temporal evils, choose the least, says prudence; of two sins, choose neither, says the Scripture. Godliness will be found to be profitable, and on the whole, "profitable to all things, having promise of this life, and that which is to come." Amen.

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#### UNKNOWN TONGUES.

THE following observations on modern miracles, and the unknown tongue, are from a sermon, by the celebrated Dr. Mc-Crie, author of the "Life of John Knox," &c., preached in Edinburgh, Sunday morning, June the 10th, 1832. The text was Luke vi. 26; but the remarks in question refer more particularly to the parallel passage,

Matt. vii. 22:—"Many will say unto me in that day," &c. There are some persons, in our day, who are possessed with the extraordinary notion that the age of miracles has not yet ceased. They are praying for the gifts of tongues, and of prophecy, and of miracles; and they even flatter themselves that their prayers have, in some degree, been answered. I would not speak harshly of these persons; but I cannot help thinking they labour under a delusion. Would they but listen to me, I would tell them to pray for a little more faith, for a little more love, for a little

more humility. This would be better than to pray, and to desire an answer to prayer, for prophecies, and for tongues, and for miracles, even to the raising of the dead. If they would but consider that it is often well that God does not give us what we desire; and that, when not contented with the blessings we enjoy under the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, he may give us over to a strong delusion, to believe a lie. If they would but reflect that the gifts for which they are so anxious, when they were actually enjoyed by the primitive church, in all the flower of its faith and simplicity, were grossly abused. And there is reason to think that, if granted now, when they are unnecessary, the canon of Scripture having been completed, and provision being made by ordinary means for spreading the gospel, they would be much more abused; not only in fostering pride, and self-confidence, but in withdrawing the minds of some good people (as I am afraid has been the case already) from those substantial, and salutary, and sanctifying, and saving truths, by which true believers, in all ages and quarters of the globe, have been fed and nourished up unto eternal life.—

The following remarks from the same discourse, though not immediately connected with the preceding observations, are possessed of too much intrinsic value to be allowed to glide away into oblivion:—

The weight of one sin, my brethren, when weighed in the balances of heaven, outweighs all the gifts of prophets, and seers, and evangelists; and will sink the soul, not only to earth, but to hell.

“Many will say to me in that day.” Christ would not say that few should be saved, but he has no scruple in telling us that many will be damned.

It is wonderful that the workers of iniquity should have “prophesied” in the name of Christ; it is more wonderful

that they should have “cast out devils;” it is more wonderful still that they should have worked miracles; but the greatest wonder of all is, that such persons should expect to be accepted at last. They lay down in the grave with a lie in their right hand; and they knew it not. But more than that! They rose in the morning of the resurrection, with their hand clenched, and the lie concealed there; and they held it up in the face of the Judge, and cried, “Lord, Lord, are we not thine?”

“Lord! Lord!” Do you think the gates of heaven will be thrown open, on your merely pronouncing a bare word; or on your showing false signals? Is it not enough that you mock God on earth? Would you claim a right to enter into his immediate presence, and to insult him before his very throne, and before his angels?

Of all the deceptions that abound in this deceitful world, the worst is that which a man practises on himself; and let me tell you, my friends, it is the most common. For one that is *drawn* aside, and ruined by a false teacher, (I speak of those in a Christian land, and under the preaching of the gospel,) there are hundreds who *turn* aside, and ruin themselves.

There is a remark on the Sermon in the Mount, by a commentator [Matthew Henry] whom I generally quote with approbation, but which does not exactly please me. He says, “It was an excellent sermon!” Why, that is what people say when they are going out of church, after hearing an oration! He speaks to much better purpose when he says, a little way further, “It is possible for people to admire good preaching, and yet to remain in ignorance and unbelief; to be ‘*astonished*,’ and yet not ‘*sanctified*.’” And I have only to add, that it is possible to be awakened under the preaching of the word, and to fall into deeper sleep after all.

## SERMON XLV.

ON THE NATURE OF PRAYER.

BY THE REV. ALEXANDER WAUGH, D.D.

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“O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.”—Ps. lxxv. 2.

WERE the object of prayer to make God acquainted with our wants, prayer were a ridiculous exercise; for the Omniscient is better acquainted with our wants than we are ourselves. Were its object to recommend ourselves to God, then it were a presumptuous exercise; for prayer includes in it a confession of guilt and misery. Were its object to press our case on the notice and feelings of God, then it were an impious exercise; for it would be a reflection on his mercy, and would seem to imply that he did not care sufficiently for us. But, the object of prayer is, to acknowledge our dependence upon God—to put his goodness to the proof. Prayer is not confined to men, nor to Christians; the inferior parts of the creation also engage in it. The ravens “cry” to God, and he heareth them—all creatures “wait” on him, that they may receive their meat in due season. There is a desire in all who live and breathe, and this desire, according to their capacity, is prayer to the Author of their being. The neglect of prayer is a most dangerous feeling in the human mind; it springs from pride, and it is a denial of the homage due to God. The lamb kneels as it sucks its parent ewe; to teach man to bow before the source of all his supplies. This homage of our minds must precede our reception of the various blessings of Divine mercy. Those who are hungry and thirsty will most relish meat and drink; the sick will most value health; those who are in

bondage will be most eager for liberty; and a sense of want will make us best relish the blessings of salvation. It is painful to a minister of the gospel, who has laboured many years among a people, to see any deficiency in this respect, and to be obliged to urge the necessity and importance of prayer; but the depravity of the human heart seems to render this often necessary.

On this occasion we will consider three things—

I. THE CHARACTER UNDER WHICH WE ARE TO VIEW GOD WHEN WE APPROACH HIM IN PRAYER.

II. THE NATURE OF THOSE PRAYERS WHICH HE WILL HEAR AND ANSWER.

III. THE ENCOURAGEMENTS WITH WHICH GOD HAS FURNISHED US THUS TO ENGAGE AND PERSEVERE IN PRAYER.

You will perceive that this is a subject of vital religion—a subject which comes home to the heart of a man; and those that love prayer will be sure to relish our theme. “O thou that hearest prayer,” draw us all unto thyself! Mark then,

*First*, THE VIEWS WE ARE TO CHERISH OF GOD WHEN WE APPROACH HIM IN PRAYER. We are to come to him,

1. *As to God in Christ*—to God rendered accessible by his merits. We are rebellious creatures; we have no right to come to the throne of mercy. Many forget this; they come without thought; they cherish no sense of guilt; they invent compliments; they turn their periods, and try how fine they can speak! Really,

this is horrid. "God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself;" and, as guilty, depraved, endangered men, it is in this character we are to come to him, as "God in Christ." "Through him we have both access by one Spirit to the Father." His mediation is the life of our prayers, the very inspiration of our desires. The throne is, as the prophet calls it, a "glorious high throne;" but it is also a "throne of grace;" otherwise, we dare not approach it, or lift up our eyes to it, or bend our knees before it. Come; but come as sinners, and rejoice that the way is opened.

2. *As a sin-pardoning God.* He who has a deep sense of guilt, will pray the most earnestly. He will have no time to study manner or words; the pressure of his guilt is too great to allow of this. Mercy is the loadstone which has attracted him to the throne. "He who listens to my prayer is a God plenteous in mercy—a God who delights in mercy—a God who forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin." If a man be sensible that he is guilty, and that God can and will pardon him, he will come with eagerness,

3. *As to an all-sufficient God.* "My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus"—"My grace is sufficient for thee." If we want knowledge, let us come to him who has revealed himself as the "Father of lights." If we want wisdom, let us seek it from that Saviour, in whom are hid all its treasures. If we want the aid of God's good Spirit, to purify and make us meet for heaven, this also is God's gift—"If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him."

4. *As to a bountiful and compassionate God.* To give us evidence of this, he has clothed himself in those characters we are sure to understand and to feel—especially that of a Father—"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." If the cold wind blows from the north, and the son who has been exposed to it comes home hungry to his father, will he give that

son a stone instead of bread? His heart revolts at it. But "how much more will your Father, which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him!" That of a mother also—"As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you"—"I dwell with him that is poor, and contrite and humble." The poor, dejected, trembling soul, who is rejected and disdained by men, shall not fail to have his cottage visited by Deity. Men may pass it by, but it is the dwelling-place, the home of the Lord of all power and grace! God compassionates those whom men often despise, and is bountiful to those to whose wants men turn a deaf ear. Let us cherish these views.

5. *As to an omnipresent and omniscient God.* We are to come to God as to one who is intimately acquainted with all our distress. There is no shadow of death impervious to his glance. His eyes run to and fro in the earth in quest of opportunities to protect and defend those who call upon him. Jonah was in the depths of the sea, but he cried unto God, and God heard him—David in the cave of Adullam—Peter in prison—Lazarus at the rich man's gate—John in Patmos: these all cried to God, and they found that God heard them. O how cheering is this thought to the mind, that however others may overlook or disregard, he will not; he will look upon us, and this is more than if all creation were to fix their attention upon us.

6. *As to a God of infinite power and strength.* He who has an eye to observe, has also an arm to protect. He is "the Lord God Almighty;" there is no enemy therefore that he is not able to subdue. All their preparations are but as a spider's web before the fierce northern blast. He can "call the things that are not as though they were." You have often to lament the inveteracy of your lusts; you frequently feel your sins prevail; but the God to whom you are here invited to draw nigh, is the God of omnipotence, and his grace is almighty. Come to him—bow the knee—pray before him, and he will subjugate all by the power of his grace. Come to God,

7. In fine, *As the Father of Christ, and*

as our Father in him. This is a relation infinitely more close and tender than that in which our children stand to us. He hath created us, and he knows that we are to be clothed, fed, taught, and have an inheritance provided for us. And if he be our Father, all jealousy, suspicion, doubt, sullenness, are unworthy our character; and poor is the excuse the best of us can make for these things. It becomes us to tell God, with reverence and frankness, all the feelings of our souls. If we did but cherish these views of God, how happy should we be in the darkest hour!

*Secondly,* THE NATURE OF THOSE PRAYERS WHICH GOD WILL ACCEPT. They are not the prayers of the unconverted—of those who are still in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity. Their addresses are represented by the prophet, as “howling”—the cries extorted by distress—the mere expressions of suffering humanity. The accents of anguish arising from the lost in hell might as properly be called prayer.

1. *They are the prayers of God's children.* “God has sent the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, enabling them to cry, Abba, Father;” and it is a strong evidence of our being children of God, when we combine obedience with our prayers. “If I regard iniquity in my heart,” said David, “the Lord will not hear me”—“Your iniquities have separated between you and me,” said the Lord to a people who nevertheless prayed to him as the God of Israel. If we read the 50th Psalm, and the 1st of Isaiah, we shall find that something more is required than the mere utterance of words of prayer. A change must be effected; there must be the temper and spirit of a child; there must be ardent desires after our Father's image; there must be honest and persevering struggles against sin.

2. *They are prayers for things suitable to God's will.* “This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.” To ask otherwise, is to ask him to violate his own law to please us. To some it may be said, “Ye have not, be-

cause ye ask not”—to others, however, “Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss”—what ye ask is not suitable for God to bestow, nor beneficial for you to receive. To ask to be rich, and great, and honoured—what is it but to ask poison, to pray to be led into temptation, to be exposed to a sore and swift destruction? What God has required you to do, you may ask for grace to accomplish. What God has promised to bestow, you may safely ask him to give.

3. *They are prayers offered up under the assistance of his Spirit*—“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered.” This he does through the teachings of God's word. And he creates within the soul such a deep feeling of its interest in the things for which it supplicates, that it can only groan; and that groaning is so strong, that it is unutterable. The Christian either cannot find words at all, or is led to ask God for what he cannot fully understand. It is the breathing of a new nature for objects congenial to it. God ever hears such prayers. Such a Christian feels that he stands on high ground; but he wishes to stand higher, and to go on unto perfection.

Never forget that it is not the words contained in a prayer, but the feelings of the heart, that constitute true prayer in the sight of God. In the 51st Psalm we have more of the true spirit of prayer than in any one portion of the Bible beside. When the heart speaks to God, words are a matter of indifference.

4. *They are prayers presented through the mediation of God's Son.* This was David's way of praying—“for the Lord's sake.” Jesus Christ taught this truth most expressly to his disciples. “Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you.” He is the hallowed altar on which all the offerings of his people must be laid, in order that they may rise up with acceptance before God. “I,” said Christ, “am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” Such are

the prayers that God will hear; and in answer to which, he will send down the blessings of his love. Such prayers as these are the marrow of practical religion. This is true Christianity—the life of God in the soul. This is the grand end of all our knowledge, of all our profession, of all our attendance upon sacraments.

True religion is the rising of the heart to God. It lies in devoutly admiring his greatness, reposing in his government, submitting to his authority, confiding in his goodness, and ardently desiring to form the temper and the conduct after the example of his Son. Prayer holds such a distinguished place in religion, that the whole of religion is frequently described by it. “This is the generation of them that seek thee—that seek thy face, O God of Jacob.” The first act of a renewed soul is prayer; the last act is like unto it; and the interval is only dignified in proportion as it is filled up by prayer. This, alas! is the only reason we can assign why many do not love prayer.

We have already considered the character of the God to whom Christians are to make supplication, and the nature of those prayers which will rise with acceptance before him. We have now to consider,

*Thirdly,* THE ENCOURAGEMENT GOD HAS GIVEN TO SUCH PRAYERS. Here I would notice,

1. *The free access which God has given us.* A throne is provided, and it is called “a throne of grace.” A mediator is provided, and through him we may have access with acceptance. Having such a high priest, we are invited to “draw nigh with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.” And this privilege is represented as extended to all nations—to all ages and conditions. Hear St. Paul’s liberality—“Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours, grace be unto you and peace,” and so on. And thus our Saviour, when he taught us to pray, saying, “Our Father,” taught us to unite ourselves with all others, everywhere, that call upon him in sincere prayer. And as God allows us ac-

cess, so he permits us to use importunity—“I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night; ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest,” &c. Jesus Christ was a man of prayer; and in addition to his own example, he has furnished us with many parables, such as that of the importunate widow; the application made by one friend to another in bed: the fact is, that importunity generally marks sincerity, and with this God is well pleased. The case of the woman of Syrophenicia is in point; she pressed her suit with a holy vehemence, amidst much that was discouraging; and our Saviour admired, and publicly extolled her importunity. God allows us access continually, permits us to come “in every time of need.” And though, for wise reasons, the blessings for which we importune may be delayed, they shall at last be bestowed, and in many cases be hastened. “The vision is for an appointed time; but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come.” Such is the access God has granted us. What pity that some should be found so disingenuous as to presume on this allowance, and to be less sensible of it, because it is a common and standing privilege! Just as the blessings of air, and water, and bread, are set little store by, because we enjoy them every day. O, if access to the throne of grace were allowed but once in a century, how eagerly would the church long for the arrival of the important moment! Blessed be God, we may come continually.

This is one encouragement. Then consider,

2. *The readiness God has manifested in hearing the prayers of his people.* We have a remarkable testimony to this effect in Isaiah lxv.—“It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and whiles they are yet speaking, I will hear.” As soon as the desire is formed, God knows it, and acts accordingly. Daniel says, “While I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin, and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my

God; yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel touched me, and said," &c.

3. *The liberality with which God has always answered prayer.* It is here as in a time of extreme drought, when a nation presents prayer to God for rain; the rain falls not only on the parched land, it falls also on the heath, the beach, the sand, the sea, and the rivers. So here: if any man feels his need of wisdom, and asks it of God, he finds it bestowed upon him, not in scanty, but liberal measures. God is represented as being plenteous in mercy, abundant in goodness, rich in communication. "The same Lord over all, is rich unto all that call upon him." In the epistle to the Ephesians the mind of the great apostle seems to swell with his theme—"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." What is God able to give? all, above all, abundantly above all, exceeding abundantly above all, above all we can ask, above all we can think. What a sublime climax is here! and all to illustrate and confirm the liberality of God. Thus, you may remember when Solomon prayed for a wise and an understanding heart, God was pleased with his request, and said, "Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; and I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour," &c. Such is the liberality of our heavenly Father's heart! And now, what shall we think of the state of that man's heart who has not offered prayer to God for a week, for a month, for whole years? Is he the friend of his own soul? If he be destitute of God's salvation, surely he has nothing but his own sloth to blame: he has not because he asks not.

4. *The great things God has done in answer to prayer,* form another strong encouragement to its continual exercise. He has softened hard, malignant hearts. Jacob had lost the affections of his brother Esau; he had given Esau just reason to hate him, and he might well expect to find him brooding over the

injuries he had received, and intent on taking a full revenge. But Jacob wrestled hard with God in prayer, using the most powerful arguments. God heard his prayer, changed the heart of his brother, and their meeting was accompanied with kind embraces and affectionate words. O there is nothing that can bring alienated friends together like prayer! This brings the heart into an element so warm, that all its hardness and coldness will soon disappear. You may remember also, the great things which God did in answer to the prayers of Moses; such as the removal of the various plagues of Egypt, and the innumerable manifestations of mercy to the Jewish people. Think of Elias, of Asa, of Jehoshaphat, of Hezekiah. And what shall be said of David? These were all men of like passions with us, and yet, how great things God did for them, and for those in whose behalf they called upon him. What encouragement is all this to prayer! We are not to expect miracles to be wrought for us, but we are taught to expect all that is in God! Observe further,

5. *How God is represented as overcome by prayer.* Thus in the case we have already referred to, Jacob at Peniel. The prophet Hosea says, "By his strength he had power with God; yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto him." Here we have a fine picture of the success attendant on the holy wrestling of a suppliant mind with God. In Exodus xxxii. there is another fine illustration of this fact. The Israelites had very greatly provoked God, and he determined to destroy them; but while he intimated his intention to Moses, aware that Moses would intercede for them, he says, "Now, therefore, let me alone, that I may consume them." Do not interpose thy powerful supplication. Moses, however, did intercede, and was successful—"the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people." A similar instance occurs in Numbers xiv. God said again, "I will smite this people." But, said Moses, "the Egyptians will hear of it, and they will say that thou didst slay them, because thou wert not able to bring

them into the land which thou didst promise to give them: rather let thy power be manifested in forgiving them"—"And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word." Thus God has, on many occasions, put on the appearance of alteration, in order to encourage holy importunity and perseverance on the part of his people. Imitate these holy men; and who shall dare to say you will not be successful?

6. *The supernatural instinct created in all renewed minds*, which leads to prayer. When God bestows upon a man the ability to pray, it is, in effect, giving that man an encouragement to pray. It was said of Saul of Tarsus after his conversion, "Behold, he prayeth." And this same man afterwards, writing to the Galatians, says, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father"—"Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?"—"How," said God to his people of old, "shall I put thee among the children? And I said, Thou shalt call me my Father, and shalt not turn away from me." This instinct is so powerful, that wherever it exists, it leads its possessor to look upwards—to pray affectionately to God—to plead with fervour and importunity—to take hold of the skirts of the robe which covers the Deity, namely, his promises. The Spirit of God is imparted to the souls of the renewed, to help their manifold infirmities. He has great reason to doubt his regeneration who is not a man of prayer.

7. *The glorious and continual intercession of Christ*. What an encouragement is this! "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins." In the 17th chapter of John, we have an admirable specimen of the mode in which he intercedes for his people; and it is the consolation of all who pray to God aright, that he is "able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

8. *The numerous promises of God*. These cluster in every page of the Bible.

They assure the praying soul that "the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and that his ear is open to their cry"—that "the prayer of the upright is his delight"—that "he will fulfil the desires of those that fear him, and hear their cry, and save them"—that "every one that asketh, receiveth," &c. &c. In the prophecies of Hosea, a mighty chain is represented as passing through heaven—from heaven to earth—from earth to the church. "I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel."

9. *The gracious and endearing relations in which God stands to his people*. In the enumeration of the various laws which were given to the children of Israel, we meet with a very touching proof of the gracious disposition of the Almighty towards his creatures—"If thou lend money to any of thy people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as a usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury. If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down; for that is his covering only; it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? And it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I am gracious." He who will thus look on a poor man, will not fail to look on those who cry to him for salvation. In innumerable passages of Scripture he represents himself in the touching relation of a parent—of a father pitying his children, giving them every good thing—of a mother comforting them, bearing them on his mind with greater constancy of affection than is even felt by the mother towards her sucking infant. He declares, that "in all their afflictions he is afflicted," and that "by the angel of his presence he will save them." He assures them, "that as mountains are round about Jerusalem, so he is round about them." He says, "he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye." Think of these, and many, many more endearing relationships which he sustains, and then ask if it be probable that he will

reject spiritual, fervent, persevering prayer!

*In fine, the experience of God's people* forms a strong ground of encouragement to prayer. And here, to which of the saints shall we turn? Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Elijah, David, Daniel, Paul; these were all men of prayer, and they all rejoiced in its efficacy and success. In fact, the very exercise of prayer does good; it calls up to our recollection our real necessities; it is calculated to inspire gratitude and confidence; it tends to bring the various perfections of God full to our view; and in every way it is likely to benefit the individual who engages in it. The reasonableness of the exercise, the comparative ease with which it may be engaged in, and the ample encouragement held out, leave all without excuse who neglect it.

From the whole, may we not refer,

1. *How great are the privileges of good men!* Whatever may be the wants they feel, they have a Father in heaven, whose eyes are ever upon them, whose heart is love, whose hands are ever open, whose stores are ever boundless and inexhaustible. They have an Advocate, ever nigh, able and willing to plead their cause. They have a Spirit intimately acquainted with them, ready to inspire acceptable prayers. Let such prize their privileges, and avail themselves of them to the very utmost.

2. *How should we bless God for a Mediator!* But for him there could be no access to God; no blessings of salvation could be enjoyed. But God hath given us Christ; and "he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

3. *How evident is the sin and folly of those who neglect prayer!* And the case is much the same with those who pray coldly and indifferently. God—the God of grace, is seated on his throne; he invites you to come, that you may be blessed, and you keep away! O, what cruelty do you practise on your own souls! If you are lean, and ill-favoured, and not what you ought to be, it may generally be traced to your wilful neglect of prayer.

Will God, think you, deny himself? The whole world cannot supply a single want of your souls; but God can and will supply them all; and what hath he said?—"Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." "O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come." Amen.

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ON THE DISCIPLINE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

I AM far from thinking lightly of the spiritual power with which Christ has armed his church. It is a high and mysterious one, which has no parallel on earth. Nothing in the order of means is equally adapted to awaken compunction in the guilty with spiritual censures impartially administered. The sentence of excommunication, in particular, harmonizing with the dictates of conscience, and re-echoed by her voice, is truly terrible: it is the voice of God speaking through its legitimate organ, which he who despises or neglects, ranks with "heathen men and publicans," joins the synagogue of Satan, and takes his lot with an unbelieving world, doomed to perdition. Excommunication is a sword, which, strong in its apparent weakness, and the sharper and more keenly-edged for being divested of all sensible and exterior envelopments, lights immediately on the spirit, and inflicts a wound which no balm can cure, no ointment can mollify, but which must continue to ulcerate and burn, till healed by the blood of atonement, applied by penitence and prayer. In no one instance is that axiom more fully verified, "the weakness of God is stronger than men, and the foolishness of God is wiser than men," than in the discipline of his church. By encumbering it with foreign aid, they have robbed it of its real strength; by calling in the aid of temporal pains and penalties, they have removed it from the spirit to the flesh, from its contact with eternity to unite it to secular interests; and, as the corruption of the best things is the worst, have rendered it the scandal and reproach of our holy religion. While it retains its character as a spiritual ordinance, it is the chief bulwark against the disorders which threaten to overturn

religion; the very nerve of virtue; and, next to the preaching of the cross, the principal antidote to "the corruptions that are in the world through lust." Discipline in a church occupies the place of laws in a state: and as a kingdom, however excellent its constitution, will inevitably sink into a state of extreme wretchedness, in which laws are either not enacted, or not duly administered; so a church which pays no attention to discipline, will either fall into confusion, or into a state so much worse, that little or nothing remains worth regulating. The right of inflicting censures, and of proceeding in extreme cases to excommunication, is an essential branch of that power with which the church is endowed; and bears the same relation to discipline, that the administration of criminal justice bears to the general principles of government. When this right is exerted in upholding the faith once delivered to the saints, or enforcing a conscientious regard to the laws of Christ, it maintains its proper place, and is highly beneficial. Its cognizance of doctrine is justified by apostolic authority: "A heretic, after two or three admonitions, reject." Nor is it to any purpose to urge the difference betwixt ancient heretics and modern; or that to pretend to distinguish truth from error is a practical assumption of infallibility. While the truth of the gospel remains, a fundamental contradiction to it is possible: and the difficulty of determining what is so, must be exactly proportioned to the difficulty of ascertaining the import of revelation; which he who affirms to be insurmountable, ascribes to it such an obscurity as must defeat its primary purpose. He who contends that no agreement in doctrine is essential to communion, must, if he understands himself, either mean to assert that Christianity contains no fundamental truths, or that it is not necessary that a member of a church should be a Christian. The

first of these positions sets aside the necessity of faith altogether: the last is a contradiction in terms.—*R. Hall.*

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THE THEATRE.

Is it not too manifest to be denied, that piety as instinctively shrinks from the theatre, as human life does from the point of a sword or the draught of poison? Have not all those who have professed the most elevated piety and morality, borne an unvarying and uniform testimony against the stage? Even the more virtuous pagans condemned this amusement, as injurious to morals and the interests of nations. Plato, Livy, Xenophon, Cicero, Solon, Cato, Seneca, Tacitus, the most venerable men of antiquity; the brightest constellation of virtue and talents which ever appeared upon the hemisphere of philosophy, have all denounced the theatre as a most abundant source of moral pollution, and assure us that both Greece and Rome had their ruin accelerated by a fatal passion for these corrupting entertainments. William Prynne, a satirical and pungent writer, who suffered many cruelties for his admirable productions in the time of Charles I., has made a catalogue of authorities against the stage, which contains every name of eminence in the heathen and Christian worlds: it comprehends the united testimony of the Jewish and Christian churches; the deliberate acts of fifty-four ancient and modern, general, national, provincial councils and synods, both of the western and eastern churches; the condemnatory sentence of seventy-one ancient fathers, and one hundred and fifty modern Popish and Protestant authors; the hostile endeavours of philosophers and even poets; with the legislative enactments of a great number of pagan and Christian states, nations, magistrates, emperors and princes.—*J. A. James.*

## SERMON XLVI.

### THE MARCH OF THE CHURCH.

BY THE REV. R. W. SIBTHORP, B.D.

IN AID OF THE MORAVIAN MISSIONS.

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*“Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?”—Sol. Song viii. 5.*

THESE words contain an exclamation uttered by some persons who are introduced into this sacred song, called “daughters of Jerusalem,” on beholding the entrance of the spouse leaning on her beloved. Without entering into any critical consideration of the meaning of these words, I shall presume, that by the “beloved” is meant the Lord Jesus, &c.; and by the “spouse,” the church, which he has purchased and redeemed unto himself by his own most precious blood. It is not so easy to say who are intended by the “daughters of Jerusalem;” but this title is intended, probably, to designate individual Christian churches, which, though collected, may be said to form the bride, or spouse, the church; yet, separately, they may be considered as partaking in her joys, sorrowing in her sorrows, and sharing in her feelings. So Bishop Hall considers that passage, “with joy and rejoicing shall they be brought unto thee:” he understands by these, separate Christian congregations. The exclamation in the text appears to be elicited from the lips of those who uttered it, on viewing the church of God coming up from among the Gentiles: “Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness—the wilderness, the wild wilderness of heathenism—leaning on her beloved?” But the words will admit of an application to any period, or age, or part of the world, in which there has been any great acces-

sion to the numbers of the redeemed. Astonished and delighted at beholding those who were not expected—beholding their beauty and grace as they come up from the desolate wilderness of heathenism; separate congregations, and separate Christian churches have exclaimed, and are exclaiming at the present day, “Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?”

Among the pleasing features of the day in which we live, there are none which more delight the Christian mind than the benevolence and good will of one denomination to another. Not that I would say the church has attained too much of this disposition; too much of that harmony which should exist between children of the same God; too much of the sympathy which should exist between members of the same body; too much of the union which should exist between inheritors of the same kingdom. Bigotry is the offspring of popery; and its spirit is maintained by the haughty claims, the pretended infallibility of that church: and it has been the cunning of its priests to foster that system, because it upholds themselves. The conduct of Christians in some of the earlier centuries was but ill calculated to remove this disposition; and the state and conduct of the church of God, in the beginning of the last century, was but ill calculated to foster love

and harmony. If, in the present day, there is a better state of things; if now there is more of the good-will and harmony which should subsist between brethren of the same family, I attribute it principally to that diffusive system which now prevails, and which forms the peculiar feature of the church at this day. The ardour of foreign conquests, and the jealousy of one nation against another, has united those who were of different opinions, and led them to go forth against the common foe; and this same principle, acting in reference to religious conquests, has been productive of great good; and what might have been productive of inconceivable mischief, has been overruled by God, as the means of promoting his glory. There are still occasions in this country on which the remark of an ancient observer is verified, "See how these Christians love!" and in which, also, the remark is exemplified, "Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it:" and in which is fulfilled the apostolical exhortation, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." The present is one of those occasions, on which it is the privilege of a member of the established church to plead the cause of another Christian church, episcopal in its constitution, and venerable for its antiquity, for its early sufferings, for the purity of its members, and for that Christian zeal which has made it so distinguished in the cause of missions. There is in the churches which they have been instrumental in forming, much, which gives us occasion to exclaim, as we behold them, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?" I propose,

*First, To offer some remarks on the general state of the heathen world, as elucidating the expression in the text, "the wilderness."*

By a "wilderness" we commonly understand a barren, trackless waste, unproductive of what is good, and productive of what is evil. I cannot show how fitly, in every respect, the heathen world is compared to a wilderness, though

I may specify some particulars of correspondence.

First, *It is trackless.* We are very incapable of forming any adequate idea of the corruption of human nature. Our faculties are far too weak to give us a full insight into the depravity of fallen man. God only knows what is in God; and he only can tell how far man has fallen from the image of God—God who made the machine; who put all its parts together with such infinite skill; he only can tell how far that machine is shaken by the fall. But there are striking facts which cannot fail to impress the minds of all who are not blinded by ignorance and pride.

1. One most affecting feature in the character of man is, *his ignorance of God.* When I say that man knows not God, I do not mean that he does not exactly understand his character—that he does not estimate aright all his providential dispensations—that he does not comprehend all his perfections fully—but that he knows him not *at all*; he might as well not exist for any idea man has of Him; and yet, He is his creator, his preserver, his benefactor. And yet, taken at the lowest, there are *five or six hundred millions* who know not their Creator, who recognise not his existence: five or six hundred millions who recognise not the source of their blessings: five or six hundred millions of subjects not recognising the king who reigns over them! I do not say that there never were any among the heathen who knew any thing of God: I apprehend there were some who rose far above their fellow countrymen; some who had some knowledge of a Supreme Being. This might be from tradition; it might be from good sense rising above vulgar ignorance; it might be some rising gleam of the Spirit who has never "left himself without witness." But these were insulated cases; and the light they had seemed not so much to guide them to him, but to show how far they and the mass around were from him. But among the heathen, generally, there is no knowledge of God. Go from north to south, from the Greenlander to the New Zealander, and you

will not find any who know their Maker, their Benefactor, and their King. In this respect they are lower than the brutes, for *they* have instinct which leads them to acknowledge the hand that feeds them, the person that cares for them; and they have something like gratitude. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib;" but man, gifted with reason, and having intellectual faculties, knows not, considers not his Owner, his Creator, his benevolent Provider! What a barren, trackless desert is the heathen world! How fitly is it compared to a wilderness!

2. Man has *no knowledge of the way to God*. This results from the other: the way to God springs from the knowledge of God. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is." The knowledge of the existence of God, and of his character and perfections, leads to the knowledge of the way to God. But among the heathen there is no answer to this question, "How shall I get to God?" So that if we could suppose it possible that a heathen, feeling he had an immortal soul, wanted to know how he might be saved, he would not find a single pathway which would lead him to God. The fallen state of human nature is nowhere marked so strongly as in the childishness and imbecility of man, as to his ideas of the way to God. Amongst the ancient heathen there were men of mighty minds, who could grasp any subject that was before them—men that were giants in philosophy, in poetry, in science, in art—men who laid down those principles which have ever since been recognised. But take these lofty spirits to find out any way of arriving at the knowledge of God, and there was not one could do so! It is astonishing to find into what ignorance they sank when they came to speak of God. Among the heathen in the present day, there is the same darkness as to God, without the same light as to other subjects. This is an affecting thought as to the blindness of the heathen world: take what part you will, east, west, north, or south, and you will not find a single path, a single track to God, to holiness, to heaven!—What a "*wilderness!*"—But

Secondly, *It is barren* as it is trackless.

I will not say that it is all alike waste; that there is nothing to please the eye of the traveller. In the wide wilderness there grows some flowers; in the trackless desert there may be some fruits which are pleasing to the taste; and which, if brought into culture, might adorn the parterre or the garden, and be useful in the field or the orchard. So there are some things in the heathen which are pleasing. But we shall nowhere find the graces of Christianity; there is not one plant of grace, one fruit of righteousness; there is nowhere for them to grow; we might as well look for flowers from marble; there is nothing in the soil suitable, nothing in the atmosphere genial to their growth.

1. There is *some principle of conscience*; and we must allow it to have some influence. This the apostle intimates, when he says of the Gentiles, "These, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, *their conscience* also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing, one another." I suppose conscience, therefore, to have some weight, and operation, and influence. But then, *first*, it operates *restrictedly*. This is its utmost effect: not to produce positive virtues, but only to restrain from positive vices. And, *secondly*, it *never operates clearly, purely*. The man may be restrained from evil by it; but this is only from a selfish motive, from a regard to his own good or misery.

2. There are *religious systems*. And in these there are some beautiful moral receipts; and I will not undertake to say that these have no influence on their conduct. But then, even in these moral codes will be found actual vices. If they forbid adultery, they acknowledge revenge—if they inculcate hospitality, they allow rendering evil for evil. They are as cold bones covered with skin; there is no flesh, no vitality, no nourishment.

3. *Civilization and cultivation* exists among them. But their civilization has fostered and encouraged vice. Increase of population is an increase of evil, if there be no counteracting principle; and

advances in art, and science, and the luxuries of life, if there be no counter-acting principle, will increase instead of diminishing vice. And the greatest degree of cultivation and civilization never, I am bold to say, gave rise to any one virtue. No; you must search this wilderness in vain to find any one flower, any one grace of which you can say, this is lovely, this is Christian! It is *barren*; human nature lies waste, unproductive. The cause is clear; there is no cultivation; there is nothing to improve the parched soil. No, brethren; vivifying waters are wanted; the soil is barren because arid, and arid because the Spirit is not there. "Until the Spirit be poured from on high," the wilderness will not be "a fruitful field," nor will "the fruitful field be counted for a forest." Brethren, let us pray for this Spirit to be poured out on the heathen.

Thirdly, *It is productive only of what is noxious and evil.* When man sinned, God's curse fell on this fair earth which he had once pronounced "good;" and instead of its bringing forth flowers, and all that was good, as its spontaneous produce, thorns, and thistles, and weeds, came up, and became its spontaneous produce. We see in this an illustration of the state of the whole region of the heathen world. St. Paul has in the Romans given us a catalogue of noxious weeds; and it is the same to this day; because the soil is the same, and cannot produce any thing better. There is something in the fruits of human nature, which are as far from God as they are capable of being, except they were diabolical; and because light is gone, it is as dark as possible. Now God is love. Look at God on earth—at Jesus Christ in the form of man; you see a God loving, showing pity, and compassion, and melting tenderness. Wherever he went, the sick, the poor, children, followed and were benefited; all to whom he could, he manifested his kindness, his love; and he was "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person." Now, go to the heathen world, and you will behold as great a contrast as you can conceive of; the poor are not

regarded; the aged are not provided for; the sick are not attended to; little children are lost sight of; contrast all this with God who is love. Again; God is perfect in truth. He is "not a man that he should lie;" he is upright, true, un-failing to his word; there is in him, I had almost said, the most perfect honesty. Now look at the heathen; you see lying; dissimulation; absolute want of integrity; every thing the most opposite to honesty. An authentic witness testifies of the most polished natives of India, that he never asked a question of one of them, when he did not find them first look him in the face that they might see what answer he wished for! God is purity. Look at the impurity of the heathen, forcing itself into their very worship. God is wisdom. Throughout the whole of the heathen world, there is the greatest absurdity and folly. God is just. The heathen are guilty of the most gross and absolute injustice. O what a wilderness! Fertile is cruelty, unkindness, falsehood, dissimulation, injustice, impurity, wrath, violence! Whatever we can imagine to be most inconsistent with the divine character, we shall find that in abundance in the heathen world! O what has sin done in the world! How different from that world on which God looked on the seventh day, and pronounced to be "very good." There was then no misery, because no sin; angels might have visited it, and would have found all delightful; a little heaven below, and every inhabitant exhibiting the perfections of God. But now, should an angel pass through the heathen world, and seek for one that bears any portion of the image of God, he would look in vain! Does he come down to gather one fair flower!—he searches, and all in vain! Is he dissatisfied and desirous of going back to heaven, supposing him ignorant of the way, and asking all, where is the way to God? he finds no one that can give him an answer! And instead of the sons of God shouting for joy over this fair creation, they would exchange their songs for notes of sorrow; they would quit it to go back to heaven, and cry over it in notes of lamentation, and mourning, and wo! Let us proceed:

*Secondly*, TO NOTICE THE POWER AND GRACE OF THE SAVIOUR DISPLAYED IN THE CONVERSION OF THE HEATHEN AS SET FORTH IN THE OTHER PART OF THE TEXT, "COMING UP FROM THE WILDERNESS, LEANING ON HER BELOVED."

It is his church that is here represented as coming up. I need not occupy your time to say that the church is now coming up from the wilderness of heathenism as it never came before. From the snowy mountains of Greenland—from the West Indies—from Africa, "black, but comely"—from the distant islands of the South Seas—and from the sultry plains of India; many are coming up to God. The church seems to spring up out of the heathen world; and Christians exclaim with delight, as they see her coming from the east, the west, the north, and the south, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?" And none appear to me to have done more to take her, to hold her up to view, to call on others to admire her as fair and lovely, than that ancient society which I have now the honour to recommend.

Now there are means, some visible and external, others invisible and internal, by which the great Head of the church operates to bring her out of the wilderness.

First, *As to the external means* by which the Spirit works, they are various. There is civilization—there is education—there is the spread of the Scriptures—but chiefly, *the preaching of the gospel*. This is the means expressly consecrated by Christ himself: the outward means that the bridegroom himself employed to bring up his spouse out of the wilderness. The Moravians have employed all these means; they have civilized with striking assiduity; they have educated the young with the greatest care; they have freely distributed the blessed Scriptures: but also, with heavenly wisdom and simplicity they have preached the gospel. There is an evident union of wisdom and simplicity in this. Man must not be wiser than God; the servant must not seek better means than those which his Master has appointed. It may seem very inadequate to human wisdom to preach the gospel of Christ crucified, and hope

by this to convert and change; but let us remember that God is wiser than men; it has "pleased him by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." It is Christian, it is childlike simplicity, to adopt the means which God has appointed; it is wisdom of the serpent, blended with the meekness of the dove. He who is anxious to do most good will do it simply in the way of God's appointment; and this has been the object of the Moravians. They have set Christ "evidently crucified" before the heathen wherever they have gone; and God has honoured, as he ever will, this means. Do we look to the West Indies, or to Greenland, and ask what has made the inhabitants what they are? We answer, it is not civilization, though they are civilized; it is not education, though they are educated; it is not reading the Scriptures, though they do read them. No; but they preached Christ the Saviour; and therefore they "come up leaning," not on civilization; not on education; not even on the Scriptures; but on Jesus Christ "their beloved." He has been set forth before them, and on him they lean and rest.

But let it be observed that this visible means of preaching is, of itself, totally ineffectual. All its efficacy arises from this, that it is the Spirit's means, the arm by which he lays hold on her to bring her up. The Spirit is the Saviour's arm; he uses the word, but he puts out also his own arm. He finds her sitting in the wilderness, desolate, in bondage, dead; but he passes by, and says unto her, "live;" he lifts her up; he says to her, "arise, shake thyself from the dust!" He puts his arm under her; he leads her up step by step, more beautiful, more graceful, more dignified as she proceeds; and causes the daughters of Jerusalem to exclaim, as he brings her up, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved!"

Secondly, But he does this also *by invisible principles operating internally on those who are brought*. The first and principal of these is faith. Faith gives vigour to the church's arm to lay hold on Christ. Like the man with the withered

hand; there are certain properties in the heathen, as in the fingers of that hand, which if they had life, they could put forth. There is conscience, there is their love of being, there is their desire of happiness, there is their dread of misery; these are so many fingers, or sinews of the church's arm; they can do nothing of themselves—they are palsied and dead. But the Spirit puts Christ before her; and the Spirit enkindles faith within her; and that faith looks at Christ, and that faith touches Christ—and conscience touches Christ—and love of being touches Christ—and desire of happiness touches Christ—and dread of misery touches Christ—and she comes to Christ, and with her fingers thus put out lays hold on Christ. It is Christ Jesus on whom she lays hold: not on God out of Christ, but Christ crucified alone. It is not the wish of imitating Christ; it is not the resolution of obedience to his will; it is not the determination to act for his glory; all these may help to make her feel her weakness; but it is faith—by this she lays hold on Christ—by this she “comes up out of the wilderness, leaning on her beloved.”

The exclamation of the text may be used with peculiar propriety, as it respects the exertions of the Moravian missions.

1. If we look at *their field of labour*, we shall find that they have brought the church out of a wilderness indeed. Where have they gone? Is there any part more barren, trackless, uncultivated than another, least likely to be productive of good?—there they have gone. They have chosen to make experiments of the preaching of the gospel on the very worst, and it has not been in vain. They have gone to Greenland, where the inhabitants were hardly human, hardly rational, where they had little more than instinct; to these they have gone, and sought to do them good. They have gone to the West Indies. When their own church was reduced to about six or seven hundred members, and in very distressed circumstances, yet they sought to bring the church up out of the wilder-

ness; and that they might do this, they were willing to sell themselves for slaves, and actually hired themselves as watchmen, that they might watch for souls. They have gone to South Africa, and to the wilds of North America. There they have sought out, and sought effectually, the church of Christ, that they might bring her up. While, therefore, we look at their field of labour, we may well exclaim, “Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?”

2. We may exclaim it if we look at their success. They have under their care nearly forty thousand converts; spiritual members of a Christian church, in thirty-six stations, in Greenland, in the West Indies, in North and South America, and in South Africa. And all this has been done, with the exception of the assistance rendered by this society, by a Christian society not exceeding ten thousand in number.

“Who,” then, we may exclaim, “is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved,” white, lovely, pure as the snows upon the mountains? ’Tis Greenland! it is the church of that place leaning on Christ. And who are these sable coloured ones, covered with dust, and sweat, and blood? ’Tis the West Indian negroes, the servants of Christ, made free by his Spirit, formed into a church, the spouse of the beloved, brought up by this society out of the wilderness, and leaning on his arm!—And who are these Hottentots, whom we were accustomed to rank among the brutes; the inhabitants of an arid, a desert land, but who are now coming up exhibiting the pure and simple graces of the Holy Spirit? They are the descendants of Ham, coming up from the wilds of Africa; proving that God has mercy on those descendants of Noah, as well as the others. It is the church, “coming up out of the wilderness, leaning on her beloved.” Cast your eyes on all the stations of this society, and think of the transporting language of Isaiah—“The wilderness, and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.”

## SERMON XLVII.

### THE INFLUENCE OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

BY THE REV. HENRY TOWNLEY.

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“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”—2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

My beloved friends, if you were to present a watch, and exhibit it to a savage who was quite ignorant of its mechanism, he would be greatly surprised at the noise, and at the movement of the hands; but have a little patience, explain to him the power of the main spring, and his surprise will cease. So it is with the men of the world: they cannot account for the ardour of the Christian's zeal, and the greatness of his exertions; but make them acquainted with the power of the love of Christ on the heart, and their astonishment will cease. One exclaimed with regard to Paul—and a wiser man never lived—“Paul, thou art mad!” and he actually had to defend himself from the charge of insanity. At Corinth, too, it seems he was constrained to put in his reply to a similar charge:—“If we be beside ourselves, it is to God; for ye say we are mad; but if we are, it is the glory of God we seek.” Ye who are astonished at what ye behold in us, look at our interior; the watch *must* thus go when the main spring is in motion. My heart *must* thus beat; my tongue *must* thus speak; I can act no other part; I am coerced to this; the love of Christ *constraineth* me; because I thus judge, “that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.” The theme, therefore, presented to our view, is *the dying love of*

*Christ*; and, according to my humble judgment, a more interesting theme cannot be adverted to. It divides our thoughts into two branches; for,

*First*, THE DYING LOVE OF CHRIST LEADS TO AN AFFECTING INFERENCE; and we shall consider this necessary inference, “If one died for all, then were all dead.” And,

*Secondly*, WE MUST ADVERT TO THE BLESSED EFFECT INTENDED TO BE PRODUCED BY CHRIST'S DEATH:—“He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.” May God pour out of his grace upon us! and may our desire be to live to his glory who made us, and purchased us for that very end! We consider, then,

I. THE NECESSARY INFERENCE FROM THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

“If one died for all, then were all dead.” But was not the apostle alive? Was he not full of activity? Did he not go from one place to another, haling Christian men and women to prison? Was there no *life* in all this? My friends, it is necessary to consider the kind of death which is here spoken of; for a man is dead, and alive at the same time, in a different sense. A man who is alive to God is dead to sin; and a man who is alive to sin is dead to God: “She that liveth in pleasure is *dead*, while she *liveth*,”—full of activity as to all that is wrong; but a paralytic, nay, *dead*, as to

all that is good. The death here spoken of is,

1. *A judicial death.* "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die," was God's premonition to Adam. A natural dissolution did not immediately take place; but he was a dead man, in the eye of God's law, as soon as he had sinned. If a man drink a cup of poison, you say, "He's a dead man!" he has drank that which will kill him. Of the man who has broken the laws of his country, and on whom sentence has been passed, and who is only waiting in his dungeon for the hour of execution, you say also, "He is a dead man!" So it is said, "Cursed is he that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them." A man who has committed but one transgression against God's law, is dead—judicially dead. You would be greatly horrified, if you were to see a fellow creature take a naked sword, and fall upon it, and slay himself; but the man who breaks the commandments of God draws a sword of much greater length—a sword that reaches to his very soul! Sin slays both body and soul; it destroys the happiness of both; it prepares both for the bottomless abyss! Now, Christ's dying to save us from dying a judicial death, abundantly implies that we had broken God's law; that we were exposed to death beyond the grave. For this was a *death of substitution*:—"Christ died for all!" "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us;" which implies that we were exposed to death. Christ was a *death of satisfaction*, as well as of substitution: "It pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief." Thereby God's law was "magnified, and made honourable;" more honourable in the eyes of the universe, than if the whole creation had obeyed it from the commencement of the creation of the world. Christ has magnified the law by sustaining its penalty, and made it more honourable than if the whole race of man had been cast into the bottomless pit, and always making, but never paying satisfaction. Hence, you see, it is implied, in the death of Christ, that we are by nature judicially dead.

"If one died for all, then were all dead." But,

2. *It is a spiritual death.* We are all still-born children, in a spiritual sense. Look at children: as they grow up, do they display any thing like supreme love to God? Do they not need much coercing in order to bring them to a throne of grace? A thousand efforts must be made; there must be "line upon line, precept upon precept," to bring them back to God. Nay, the very word *religion* implies a being brought back, a being bound to God. We are, by nature, spiritually dead: like the idols of the heathen, we have eyes, but see not; ears, but hear not; feet, but walk not; hands, but handle not; eyes, that behold not the glory of the Saviour; ears, that hear not the voice of his commands; feet, that walk not in the way of his ordinances; hands, that are not employed in doing his will. Now, the death of Christ fully implies this death of ours. One object of that death was to make us spiritually alive, purchasing for us the gift of the Holy Spirit; without which we never can be renovated, or made fit for the service of God. "It is expedient for you," said the Saviour, "that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come; but when I depart, I will send him unto you." The Holy Spirit is the Comforter of God's people; for he raises them from a state of death to a state of life. Was not Christ a comforter to the sisters at Bethany, when he said to their brother Lazarus, who was in a state of incipient putrefaction, "Come forth!" Was he not a comforter to the family? And is he less so, when he says to a dead sinner, "Loose him, and let him go?" But Christ says, "It is expedient for this that I should go away. The soul will not be quickened, will not be comforted, unless I die; I must go to the bar of Pontius Pilate; I must be condemned; I must be led forth and crucified on the hill of Calvary; I must be buried in the grave; I must rise from the dead, and ascend to heaven to receive gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that they may be put into the way of receiving spiritual life." "If one died for all, then

were all dead"—dead judicially—dead spiritually.

3. *It is a painful death.* The mind naturally dislikes to meditate on death. The idea of *natural* death is always connected with the idea of pain. The idea of *judicial* death naturally fills the soul with pain. Could you hear God say, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," and not be sensible of pain? It is painful *to the soul*; to be punished, with fiery destruction, from the presence of the Lord. It is painful *to the body*; all our pains, sufferings, and afflictions, are the result of sin; we begin to experience these pains on earth; and if Christ had not come and died, we must have experienced them in their maturity, and through eternity. Christ's dying a *painful* death, implies the *greatness* of our sins. "My soul," said he, "is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death:"—in the garden, "he sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground:" on the cross, he cried, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" Yet there was support in all this, because of that pronoun "*my*"—"MY God." But, O, wicked man, should you die in your iniquities, your soul would indeed be plunged in sorrow!—if possible, you would sweat great drops of blood, when God shall swear in his wrath that you are cursed, and that for ever! *You* will not be able to use that mitigating word, *my* God. But you may infer, from the death of Christ, what a painful death the death of a sinner is. The body of Christ was in excruciating pain; but it was the *mental* anguish which produced that bloody sweat. If Christ suffered such a painful death, then the death of sin is a painful death. But the whole is not yet told; for,

4. *It is eternal death.* Death cannot produce life; a dead sinner cannot change his own heart. Where is the man that ever raised himself from a death of sin to a life of righteousness? Man is not able to remove pain of body; it goes on, notwithstanding all his struggles and efforts. The death of Christ proves it to be eternal death, because no man could ever have renewed himself by his own means. Could we have obtained the holy, quick-

ening Spirit; could we have lived comfortably, and so as to glorify God, without the death of Christ, then, that death would have been unnecessary. "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." The whole universe might have exclaimed, Why this waste, this immense waste, of the sufferings of Christ, if they be not needed? The death of Christ proves that righteousness *could not* come by the law; and if Christ had not died, *our* death must have been eternal. "Without shedding of blood, there is no remission:" without remission of sins, there is no life for the soul. But we have to say,

5. *This death is universal.* "If one died for all, then were *all* dead;"—you, and I, and all the vast family of mankind, are by nature dead. Now, Christ died *for all*, as it respects *SUFFICIENCY*. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father. And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for *the sins of the whole world.*" Yes, there is a sufficiency of merit in Christ for the sins of the whole world, for every individual of the family of man. If the population of the world were doubled; if it amounted to sixteen hundred millions, instead of about eight hundred millions, still the death of Christ is enough for its redemption. There is enough in Christ to quicken all that are dead, as well as to comfort all that believe, and all that are broken in heart. Yet there is a limitation, as it respects its application. Some, we know, will be raised to glory; some will be hurled to hell; some will stand at the right hand of God; some will stand on the left: to some he will utter those words which will produce through all their souls an ecstatic thrill, "Come, ye blessed!" To others, he will address those appalling words which will fill them with quaking horror for ever, "Depart, ye cursed!" Therefore, with regard to the application of the death of Jesus Christ, and the virtue of his most precious blood, there are limits to those who repent and believe the gospel. He "died for all, that *they which live* should not henceforth live to themselves," and so on.

My brethren, have you ever thought that you are *individually, personally* concerned in all this? The word of God often comes to us as it did to David. The prophet began with a parable: David thought he spake of some one else: the prophet pointed to the monarch with his finger, and said, "*Thou art the man!*" The text points to *thee*, and to *thee*: "If one died for all, then were *all* dead;" and thou art included in the number.

Thus I have directed your attention to the affecting inference to be drawn from the death of Christ. "If one died for all, then were all dead;" it is a judicial, a spiritual, a painful, a universal death; and it would have been an eternal death to each of us, had it not been for the advent of Christ. If we looked at our world as a vast churchyard; now, we see a hospital erected in the midst of it; we are not very active; we are barely alive; but we groan, and our groaning is a sign that life is not extinct, and that groan for restoration shall not be rejected. What if we looked at the world as a valley of vision, full of bones: now, by the coming of Christ, we behold a shaking among the dry bones; and, if we can but cry, "Come from the four winds, O breath of the Lord, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live!" we may hope to see a goodly number, even in this neighbourhood, who shall rise to spiritual life; and our souls will be greatly refreshed! But we must go on, and consider,

## II. THE LOVE OF CHRIST AND ITS INFLUENCE.

"He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." We have thought on the affecting inference: but be not alarmed; do not sink into despair; there is complete redemption for you. A merchant may be in great perplexity; and, as he looks over his ledger, he may tremble at the apprehension of consequences; but, if you could say to him, Be not alarmed; here are a hundred thousand pounds to meet your exigencies, he would be perplexed no more. Sinner, be not afraid; here is enough to restore thee to life, and to administer joy and gladness to thine

immortal spirit! "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." It appears from these words, that the great effect to be produced by the death of Christ is our devoted attachment to him; "that we should not henceforth live *to ourselves*"—a mean, ignoble end: for, what are we, that we should live for ourselves? But, "to him which died for us, and rose again." Now, here notice,

1. *The reasonableness of this devoted attachment to Christ.* We thus "*judge.*" Christianity is a reasonable religion; it brings reason into its noblest exercise. The apostle proves himself a good logician, by thus reasoning from inferences. He infers that men were dead; and then he infers again that, such being the plan of redemption, to renew men and make them happy, it is highly reasonable to love Christ, by whom all this is secured. Let us consider its reasonableness. Your life is derived *from* Christ, and should therefore be employed *for* Christ. You have not quickened yourselves; your stores of comfort and of grace are not dug up out of the mine of your own hearts; the crown of glory which you are hereafter to wear, is not made by your own hands. If, then, you derive your life of justification, of holiness, of glory, not from yourselves, but from Christ; then, you should not live to yourselves; you should not be your own. If you bought a house, should another occupy it? If Christ purchased your souls, should not he possess them? I remember an illustration of this point, made use of by a native teacher abroad. "Look at yon auction mart," said he; "there is a pile of goods marked with a man's name; they are *his*—he has *bought* them. And you are not your own; you are purchased with a price; Christ has a right to you." Yes, brethren, Christ has a right to you; he does not say, "I created you," though he has a right to you on that ground; he does not say, "I have preserved you," though that strengthens his claims; but, "I have *PURCHASED* you." And if he has purchased you, will you not live to him? "If, when we were enemies, we were

reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." The apostle adverts, in the text, to the *resurrection* of Christ, as well as his death. The resurrection of Christ ratifies all; it is the broad seal of heaven affixed to the value of the death of Christ. "Labour not for the meat that perisheth," said Christ, "but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed." Now, how did God the Father seal Christ? There was the seal of holiness—there was the seal of miracles; but the grand and most conspicuous seal of all was, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This ratifies our morning's meditation; this ratifies the reasoning of the apostle. Being thus made alive by Christ, it is reasonable to serve him. We have not a dead Saviour: Christ has died, but he has also risen; and we may live through him, and he, being risen, can and will receive our services.

But the chief idea of the apostle is, that he upholds this life in being, *by his intercession*. He ascended; and in heaven he intercedes to preserve the life he has implanted. "This man," said the apostle, "continueth ever; wherefore, he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him:" he is able to save them through all their difficulties, and troubles, and temptations. Christ will carry you through with a high hand and an outstretched arm. Your hills of impediments and difficulties are not too high; your thickets are not too close; Christ will lead you on, and bring you safely through; therefore the apostle reasons very conclusively, when he says, "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." Mark,

2. *The ardour of his attachment.* "The love of Christ constraineth us." What must have been Dr. Doddridge's feelings when he entered the dungeon of a prisoner

with a reprieve, which he had obtained for him! 'The poor man fell down at the feet of the doctor, and said, "I will be yours! wherever you go, I am yours! Sir, every drop of my blood thanks you, for you have had mercy upon every drop of it!" If so, what is due from us to that Saviour to whom we owe our eternal salvation? Are these your feelings, while you taste but a few drops of this mercy? O, what then will your feelings be when Christ leads you to the fountain above, and fills you with felicity in that happy and everlasting abode! Surely, then, the love of Christ should constrain you! You are *not* to live to yourselves; here is a negative; you are to "cease to do evil;" you should be dead to your own private, separate, selfish interests; and if you are not, you will ruin that very interest which your anxiety to promote leads you to neglect your souls. Love yourselves; but exalt not your love of self into that supreme love which you owe to God. Love your neighbours as yourselves; but love God with a *supreme* love. Live not in heathen selfishness, saying, "What shall I eat? what shall I drink?" Live not in proud selfishness, like the monarch who said, "Is not this great Babylon which I have built by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" All our proud towers and palaces must be levelled; the body must be kept down by temperance and chastity, and brought into subjection. All must be subordinate to the will of Christ. His example must influence us; there must be in us the same zeal for the salvation of souls. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall he satisfied." Nothing pleases, nothing satisfies him but this; and you please him most, when most you aim to seek and to save that which is lost. The apostles, and their immediate successors, on whom their spirit rested, aimed to distribute the blessings of the gospel to all around them. They travelled into regions which had not heard the gospel; and having established pastors, they went on to plant the gospel in other countries also. It is painful to observe by how few their example has been imitated, and to consider how little has been done to pro-

pagate the gospel, by nations who owe so much to that very gospel. We have reason to rejoice that this reproach is about to be rolled away from our own nation, and that this apostolic spirit bids fair to be revived. But, O, when we look at this apostle! How he speaks of his labours for Christ! And yet he was a modest man, and very humble; and he would not have said all this, if it had not been necessary to vindicate himself from slander, and to stimulate others to activity. Hear what he says: "In labours more abundant; in stripes above measure." If we had received stripes but *once*, it would be enough to deter some of us from preaching the gospel ever afterwards. "In prisons frequent, in deaths oft; of the Jews, five times received I forty stripes, save one; thrice was I beaten with rods; once was I stoned;"—and then he was left for dead;—"thrice I suffered shipwreck:"—some of us have never been out at sea, and never suffered shipwreck; this would be bad, did it occur but once; the apostle endured it *thrice*!—"a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often; in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen:" in short, he endured trials, the very account of which is too long to read; we have read sufficient to excite blushes on our cheeks. May God give us all to breathe a more ardent attachment and love to him! Notice also,

3. *The duration of this attachment.* "That they which live should not *henceforth* live unto themselves, but unto him." All futurity is imbodied in this expression, "*henceforth*." As long as we exist below—in the hour of death—beyond the grave—for ever and ever. We have begun a new year; now, let us give *this year* to God. Have you devoted it to him? Have you said, "Lord, I am bought with thy blood; I give myself to *THEE*?" Give him every month of the year, every week of the month, every day of the week, every hour, every moment of the day. Let not a word, a thought, an action, be so our own, as not to be supremely his. Let us give our time, our talents, our substance, our *all*, to God.

He gave soul, and body, and *ALL*, for you. What could he give more? And what will you think of keeping back?

"Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands your life, your soul, *your all*."

Be ready to die, to shed your blood for him, should he require it. We read of the venerable Polycarp, that when he was brought forth to suffer, the proconsul urged him again and again to "*reproach Christ*." Polycarp answered, "Eighty and six years have I served him, and he hath never wronged me; and how can I blaspheme my King, who hath saved me?" Eighty and six years! But, my brethren, this is only the beginning of our service. Paul calls himself "a servant of Jesus Christ;" and, let me assure you, you will never find a better Master. Search the world through, "from Britain to Japan," you will never find a better! Serve him, then, "from *henceforth*," through life, in death, and for ever. "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not *henceforth* live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

My friends, *we have commenced a NEW YEAR*. Let me entreat you to devote it to God. Every evening examine how this has been done; every morning, before you enter on the avocations and pursuits of the day, renew your vows to him. Peruse his will in the Bible; aim to promote his honour and glory; and each evening pray to him to efface all the stains of guilt, by his most precious blood, and to give you continually of his Holy Spirit, that all your efforts may be crowned with success.

Some of you are about to *come to the table of the Lord*. There Christ will be evidently set before you crucified. Pray earnestly that Christ may be revealed in your hearts, and made "known" to you "in the breaking of bread."

My beloved friends, is not this a *suitable* subject? *An important connexion has commenced*. Should not each give himself to God? Nothing can assist me

more in my duty than to have the con-  
straining love of Christ. Then I shall  
seek "not yours, but you;" your souls,  
and not your gifts.

And will not you pray for success? A  
celebrated commentator on the words of  
the text remarks, that the expression,  
"*constraineth us,*" signifies to hold, to  
keep in a station, as soldiers are held  
and kept together under one banner or  
ensign; and he refers to that expression,  
"*His banner over me was love.*" Yes,  
my friends, under his banner we shall  
rest in love. Objects, as they approach  
one common centre, approach each other  
also; and the nearer we approach the cen-  
tre, the nearer we approach each other.

In the prospect, then, of a new year, of  
approaching the table of the Lord, and of  
engaging in a new Christian connexion,  
is not this a suitable subject? It is well  
calculated, by the blessing of God, to  
unite our hearts to each other, the people  
to the minister, and the minister to the  
people, and to draw forth your hearts to  
those around you. Let it be the subject  
of your meditation, that it may be to you  
"*the power of an endless life.*" And  
when the earth is wrapped in flames, and  
the wicked are cast into hell, may we all  
be among the number of those who shall  
say, "*To Him that loved us, and washed  
us from our sins in his own blood, to Him  
be glory and dominion for ever and ever!*"  
Amen and amen.

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GOD INVISIBLE.

MUCH is seeing, feeling man actuated  
by the objects around him. All his  
powers are roused, impelled, directed  
by impressions made on his sensitive  
organs; yet objects of sense have only  
a definite force upon him. A hundred  
weight crushes a man's strength to a  
certain degree, and no more: he sustains  
and bears it away. On the edge of the  
ocean he may tremble at the vast ex-  
panse; but he tries the depth near the  
shore, and finds it but a few feet, and no  
longer fears to enter it. The waves can-  
not overtop his head; or, is it deep? he  
can swim, and no longer regards it with

fear. Nay, he builds a ship, and makes  
this tremendous ocean his servant, wields  
its vastness for his own use, dives to its  
deep bottom to rob it of its treasures, or  
makes its surface convey him to distant  
shores. A much smaller object shall  
affect him more, when his senses are less  
distinctly acted upon, but his imagination  
is somewhat aroused. When he travels  
in the dark, he starts at a slight but  
indistinct noise; he knows not but it  
may be a wild beast lurking, or a robber  
ready to seize on him. Could he have  
distinctly seen what alarmed him, he  
had undauntedly passed on; it was only  
the moving of the leaves, waved gently  
by the wind. He stops, he considers  
well, for he hears the sound of water  
falling; a gleam from its foaming surface  
sparkles in his eye, but he cannot tell  
how near to it, or how distant; how  
exactly it might be in his path; how  
tremendously deep the abyss into which  
he may fall at the next step. Had it  
been daylight, could he have examined it  
thoroughly, he had then passed it without  
notice; it is only the rill of a small ditch  
in the road side; his own foot could have  
stopped the trickling current.

This effect of indistinctness rousing the  
imagination is finely depicted in Job iv. 14.  
Eliphaz describes it thus:—"Fear came  
upon me, and trembling, which made all  
my bones to shake: then a spirit passed  
before my face; the hair of my flesh  
stood up: it stood still, but I could not  
discern the form thereof." The senses in  
this description are but slightly affected;  
the eye could not discern any specific  
form, the touch could not examine the  
precise nature of the object: the imagina-  
tion, therefore, had full scope; the mind  
was roused beyond the power of sensible  
objects to stimulate it, and the body felt  
an agitation greater than if its senses  
had been more fully acted upon. "He  
trembled, the hairs of his flesh stood up:  
he could not discern the form;" it might  
therefore be terrific in its shape or tre-  
mendous in its size. "It stood still," as  
if to do something to him; to speak;  
perhaps to smite or to destroy! And how  
could he guard against that which he

could not see, could not tell whence or what it was; that which, from what he could discover, and still more from what he could not discover, seemed to be no mortal substance to which he was accustomed, and with which, with care and courage, he might deal safely; but a spirit utterly beyond his impression, having unknown power to impress even him, who can tell in what degree? The certainty of an object so near him, joined to the uncertainty of what might be his powers, intentions, and natural operations, impressed him deeply with awe, expectation, and anxiety. How absurd, then, how contrary to all their feelings in other cases, is the conduct of infidels who affect to despise God,—to deny his existence because they cannot see him,—or, without affecting this, do actually forget and do him despite, by occasion of this circumstance! Men who can be appalled at some distant danger, and grow courageous at what is near at hand; who tremble at a fellow man, or crawling reptile, and only show hardihood when their foe is Almighty.

Without inquiring what Eliphaz saw, let us apply these ideas to the Supreme Being; let us meditate on an object of infinitely greater, nearer importance,—“the invisible God,” the most impressively important, because invisible. Let us, for a moment, suppose the contrary to be the case: suppose the Deity to be the object of our senses; he then loses much of his majesty; he becomes fixed to one spot, that in which *we* can see him. He must be distant from many other places, and when revealing himself in other places, must be far distant from us, even at a time when we must need his presence. Nay, we should begin to compute him; to philosophize upon and attempt experiments with him. Were he vast as the starry heavens, we could measure him; bright as yonder sun, we could contrive to gaze at him; energetic as the vivid lightning, we could bring him down to play around us. In no form can we conceive of his being an object of sense, but we sink him to a creature; give him some definable shape, reduce him to a

man or mere idol, and we have need to provide him a temple made with hands for his accommodation.

If, indeed, there were any doubt of his existence, (but that man is incapable of reasoning who reasons thus,) there are proofs enough that he is at our right hand, though we do not see him; that he works at our left hand, though we cannot behold him. Instead of asking, with a sneer of doubt, Where is he? or carelessly thinking thus,—Shall God see? a much more rational method is with awe and reverence to say, “Whither shall I flee from thy presence? Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.” Could any supposition take place, even of his momentary absence—that he was far off, or on a journey, or asleep, and must needs be awaked—it might be alleged to sanction the careless, provided they were aware of his absence, or knew the time of his drowsiness or distance; but an omnipresent Almighty ought to fill us with seriousness; and the uncertainty of his operations, when, how, and where he will work, should fill us with deep, lasting, and constant awe.

He exists: the thought makes a temple in every place I may be in; to realize it, is to begin actual worship; whatever I may be about, to indulge it is to make all other existence fade away. Amid the roar of mirth, I hear only his voice; in the glitter of dissipation, I see only his brightness; in the midst of business, I can do nothing but pray. He is present! what may he not see? The actions of my hands he beholds! the voice of my words he hears! the thoughts of my heart he discerns! Could I see him, I might on this side guard against his penetrating eye, or on the other side act something in secret, safe from his inspection; but present, without my being able to discern him, I ought to be watchful every way; the slightest error may fill us with awful apprehensions. Even now, says conscience, he may be preparing his vengeance, whetting his glittering sword, or drawing to a head the arrows of destruction. Could my eyes see his movements, I might be upon my guard; might flee to

some shelter, or shrink away from the blow; but, a foe so near, and yet so indiscernible, may well alarm me, lest the act of iniquity meet with an immediate reward; the blasphemous prayer for damnation receive too ready an answer from his hot thunderbolt!

He is a Spirit! what can he not do? Vast are his powers, quick his discernments, invisible his operations! No sword can reach him, no shield of brass can protect against him, no placid countenance deceive him, no hypocritical supplications impose upon him. He is in my inmost thoughts, in every volition; he supports the negotiating principle, while it determines on its rebellions, or plans some mode by which to elude his all-penetrating perception. Vain is every attempt at evasion or resistance. "God is a Spirit;" is present every moment, surrounds every object, watches my steps and waits upon me, though I cannot discern his form, his measure, his power, or direct his movements. I see him before my face in the bright walks of nature, but I cannot discern his form. The rich landscape shows him good, wise, and bounteous: but how bounteous, good, or wise, who, from the richest landscape, can be able to guess? The brilliant sun gives a glimpse of his brightness; the vast starry concave shows his immensity; but how bright, how immense, it were impossible to say. Hark! he speaks in that bursting thunder, or he moves in that crushing earthquake, he shines in that blazing comet. So much I can easily discern, but God is still far beyond my comprehension. I see nothing but the hidings of his power; himself is still unknown.

He guides the affairs of providence. I see him before my face, but I cannot behold his form. Who but he could have raised Pharaoh;—the Nebuchadnezzar of ancient or modern times? Who but he could have rooted up a firmly fixed throne, and poised a mighty nation upon the slender point of a stripling's energies? I have seen him pass before me in my own concerns, leading me in a path I did not know, stopping me when on the verge of some destruction, filling my exhausted

stores, and soothing my wearied mind to sweet serenity. I could not but say, "This is the Lord's doing, it is marvelous in my eyes:" but I cannot discern the form; I know not what he will next do, nor dare I walk with presumptuous steps, or repose with self-complacent gratulation, and say, "My mountain stands strong, I shall never be moved." He hides his face for a moment, and I am troubled; he withdraws his hand, and I die.

I see a spirit passing before me, I hear his voice in the secret recesses; I find that there is a God, that he is near, that he stands full in view, with appalling indistinctness, so that I tremble, and the hairs of my flesh stand up; yet I cannot discern the form. I know not what affrights, stops, impresses, crushes me. Company I hate, for it neither dispels my sensations, nor harmonizes with them. Solitude I dread; for the invisible Presence is there seen, and the unknown God is there felt in all his terrifying influence. To deny that some one is acting upon me, must be to deny that I see, feel, am anxious. Could I tell what, or who, I might call the wisdom of man to my assistance; but it is the unknowable, yet well known; the indiscernible, yet surely seen; the incomprehensible, intangible, yet fully understood and ever present God, that supports my trembling frame, and meets the warmest wishes of my too daring mind; the resolute determinations, inefficacious exertions, and the stubborn submission of an unwilling soul.

Ah! let this present Invisible encircle me with his mercy, defend me with his power, fill me with his fear, and save me by his almighty grace. Then, though I discern not his form, I shall be conscious of his presence, and the delightful consciousness shall fill me with reverence indeed, but not make my flesh to tremble. He shall soothe my sorrows, inspire my hopes, give me confidence in danger, and supplies in every necessity. The consciousness of his nearness, approbation, and mercy, shall enable me to endure like Moses, as seeing Him who is INVISIBLE.  
—John Foster.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR PARENTS AND TUTORS.

1. ALL parents should remember their near relation to their children; and that for a parent to betray their souls to sin and hell, by neglect or by ill means, seems more inexcusable cruelty, than for the devil, that is, a known enemy, to do it.

2. Consider how very much their welfare is intrusted to your care. You have the teaching of them before the ministers, have them always nearer with you, and have a greater power over them. O, that you knew what holy instructions, heavenly excitations, and good examples God requireth of you for their good; and how much of the hopes of the church and world lie on the holy skill and fidelity of parents, in the right education of youth!

3. Feed not their sinful desires and lusts; accustom them not to pride, to idleness, to too much fulness or pleasing of the appetite; but teach them the reasons why they ought to exercise the virtues of temperance and mortification, and show them the sin and mischief of all sensuality.

4. Yet use them with tender and fatherly love, making them perceive that the abstaining from these evils is for their own good. Cherish their profitable delight; study how to make all good delightful to them; and encourage them by sparing rewards and prudent commendations. Tell them of the wisdom and goodness of God's word, and let them read the lives of holy men.

5. Choose them such callings, habitations, and relations, as will make most for the common good, and for the advantage of their souls; and not those that will be most subservient to the covetousness, pride, and slothfulness of their nature.

6. Know their particular inclinations, corruptions, and temptations, and accordingly keep and restrain them with the greatest vigilance, watching against these dangers as you would do against death.

7. Settle them under wise and godly pastors, and in the familiar company of godly persons, especially those of their own age and usual converse.

8. Keep them as much as possible from temptations at home and abroad, especially those that tend to sensuality and to impiety, or corrupting their judgments against religion. Thrust them not, beyond sea or elsewhere, in an unfortified state of mind among deceivers, as some cruelly do for the sake of a mere ornament.

9. Remember how you dedicated them to Christ in baptism, and what was promised to be done, and what renounced on their parts, and what you bound yourselves to do.

10. Remember, likewise, how much the happiness or misery of the church of Christ, and of the kingdoms of the world, doth lie in the right or wrong education of youth by the parents, much more than by our universities or schools.

11. Remember that your own comfort or sorrow in them lieth chiefly in your own duty or neglect. If they prove to be wicked persons and the plagues of the world, and you be the cause, it may tear your own hearts. But what a joy is it to be the means of their salvation, and of their public service in the world!

12. Disgrace sin to them, and commend holiness by word and practice. Be yourselves what you would have them to be; and pray daily for them and for yourselves. The Lord bless this counsel to them and to you!—*Richard Baxter.*

## SERMON XLVIII.

### THE DANGER OF RELAPSE.

BY THE REV. R. W. JELF, B. D.

CHAPLAIN TO THE DUKE OF CUMBERLAND, AND PRECEPTOR TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS  
PRINCE GEORGE.

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*“When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.”—Matt. xii. 43—45.*

THE nature of the human soul, and its relation to the world of spirits, are manifestly mysteries inscrutable to our present faculties, and they have eluded every attempt to decipher them by mere reason. The way is thus left open for revelation, to the discoveries of which, as proceeding from God, who is a Spirit, no adequate answer can be returned by reason, because those discoveries are above reason, and out of its sphere. Whatever revelation has disclosed on subjects, otherwise unapproachable, it is in the highest degree irrational to neglect, or to explain away. Some knowledge is better than entire ignorance, even in matters of speculation, but the nature of the soul being more a practical than a speculative question, the knowledge of its properties, however obtained, may throw such a light upon its workings as will tend directly to its well-being. It is, for instance, a matter of practical importance to know whether there is any exterior power which influences the spirit of man; for if there is, then any plan of human conduct, which leaves such an element out of the calculation, must be erroneous or imperfect.

Now this question, which never could have been determined by reason alone, is

decided in the affirmative by the express testimony of the Holy Scriptures. We are taught in terms which the plainest understanding cannot mistake, that there exists a wicked spirit, a creature in rebellion against the Almighty, the hater of all goodness, the author of all evil, the enemy of God and man; that this person, who is the prince of devils, aided by his angels, inferior agents of malice and wickedness, is personally engaged in spiritual warfare with mankind, operating in some unexplained manner upon the soul, suggesting and furthering wicked thoughts and actions, with success exactly proportioned to the condition, and the resistance, of his victims; that this warfare began in paradise, where our first parents, yielding to his temptation, have thereby entailed upon their descendants a weak and sinful nature; that this warfare must have ended in the subjugation of all mankind, had not God, in fulfilment of his merciful promise, sent forth a Deliverer, who, by the most wonderful means, trampled upon the common enemy; that there is thenceforward provided, for each partaker in the new covenant, a method, by which the assaults of Satan may be sustained; but that the chief efforts of the enemy are directed against

the church, and the religion of Christ, and that therefore "they that are Christ's" should be specially on their guard; finally, that the spirit, who has been thus permitted to try us, shall be at length utterly conquered, and cast "into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Upon this warfare then, as against the church, and against individuals, the whole Christian religion, and, consequently, the salvation of us all, depends. "For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." A right belief on this subject is not a matter of indifference, but one, which must modify and influence the whole tenor of our lives. He, that knows his enemy, "so fights, not as one that beateth the air."

We have thus far considered that agency of Satan, which concerns all mankind in every age; but there was another manifestation of his power over men, and another of Christ's triumphs over Satan, which most signally characterized the period of our Saviour's appearance, the possession of men by devils, and the casting forth of devils by the word of God. At what time such possessions ceased, it is now idle to inquire; but certain it is, that during our Lord's ministry, and subsequently to it, there were multitudes of persons, not figuratively, but really, possessed of devils, and that multitudes of such devils were cast out by our Saviour's almighty word and name. If we will content ourselves with the *facts*, without pretending to understand the *manner* of the possession, the *literal* interpretation of the narrative is conclusive. "Possession" is not a mere allegorical expression for mental diseases; the circumstances of many of these occurrences forbid this interpretation, but it was a positive occupation, in some mysterious manner, of the persons of men by wicked and impure spirits. Such facts would not have been so carefully revealed, unless they had been intended for our learning and use: and the purpose evidently was, first, to prove that our Saviour was the person appointed to bruise the serpent's

head, and secondly, to give in these extraordinary instances of Satan's influence what may be called almost a palpable proof to that, and to future generations, of the *reality* of the devil's personal agency in the ordinary operations of the soul. Those who saw "him, that was possessed with the devil and had the legion, sitting and clothed, and in his right mind," after hearing the devils beseeching Jesus, "that he would send them into the swine, that they might enter into them," and after seeing the herd of swine run violently down a steep place into the sea, the liberation of the man being thus identified with the destruction of the swine, those who witnessed all this could entertain no doubts as to the *ordinary* machinations of Satan, as revealed on other occasions.

It would seem that this last conclusion was sanctioned by our Saviour himself, when he uttered the parable implied in the text. That it is a parable, though not expressly called so, is evident from the words which follow the text; "so shall it be also to this wicked generation." He had therefore a farther meaning in view beyond the mere description of the miserable state of that man, who should again be occupied by the evil spirit, which had been driven forth from him for a season. The comparison, indeed, was suggested, after the manner of our Saviour's mode of teaching, by the miracle which he had just wrought in casting out the devil which was dumb, and it was also the very fittest emblem of our Saviour's additional meaning; but it was intended to convey to that, and to succeeding generations, a lesson of the very utmost consequence to our salvation, no other, than the dangers of apostasy from the faith, and of a relapse into sin and wickedness, "after we have been once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost."

The parable in the first instance was applied to that generation; "so shall it be likewise to this wicked generation." The Jews were called to salvation by the wonderful works which were being wrought amongst them; the throne of

Satan was visibly shaken: those, who accepted the yoke of Christ, and threw off the yoke of sin, were henceforward able "to resist the wiles of the devil;" the absolute power of the evil spirit, therefore, during this period of probation was, contingently on the choice of evil, or of good, suspended; but it was not destroyed; and that wicked generation was warned, that in rejecting Christ, they would ensure an entrance to their restless enemy, and to "seven other spirits more wicked than himself."

The parable then is founded on the actual state of those unhappy persons, who in our Saviour's time were possessed, and inhabited by devils; and its first application was to that faithless people, who rendered vain, as far as they were concerned, our Saviour's victory over Satan. Their condition was worse after our Lord's appearance, than it had been before. Had he never lived amongst them, never wrought his wonderful works, never died to redeem them from the powers of darkness, they might have had more excuse for their impenitence. But to have seen all this, and yet not believed, was a worse spiritual condition, than if they had never seen it, than if Satan had retained undisturbed possession of mankind. Their first state was in some sort out of their own control, they were born under the power of Satan, but their last state was brought upon themselves by their own wilfulness, and hardness of heart. "The last state of that generation was, therefore, worse than the first."

But, although this warning to the Jews was the first intention of our Saviour's illustration, we shall be justified in making a second and more general application. Bearing in mind, that the healing of those possessed of devils was only an instance of that dominion over spiritual wickedness, which belonged essentially to the character of the Redeemer, and that what he did then for the bodies of a certain number, he has done in a spiritual sense for all, to whom the offer of salvation is made, we shall see that this warning against the danger of spiritual relapses, applies with equal force to ourselves. We too were under the bondage of sin

and death, and spiritually possessed by our great enemy. The devil has been cast forth. The house then "has been swept and garnished." But the work is not yet completed. The great adversary of our salvation is ever on the watch to enter again into the believer's heart. He "seeketh rest, and findeth none." We are still capable of falling; and if we fall, it is under the dominion, not of one spirit only, but of seven companions more wicked than himself, and "the last state of our souls is worse than the first."

In this parable there are three separate conditions, in which our spiritual nature may be placed; the first, the possession by the unclean spirit, which is equivalent to our natural captivity under the serpent; the second, the casting out of the devil, which coincides with our spiritual renovation, our deliverance from his chains, and our capacities for working out our salvation, under the glorious privileges of the gospel; and the third, the re-entrance of the devil into his former habitation, and his renewed and increased dominion over his unhappy victim, which corresponds to the condition of those, who have neglected, or despised the blessings and mercies of God, who "have done despite to the Spirit of grace," and have delivered themselves over afresh to wickedness and corruption, to sin and death.

The very possibility of so frightful a relapse might compel us to look into our own hearts, and to see what is passing there. It needs no argument to dissuade us from so terrible an apostacy; he who is not moved by the simple illustration of our Saviour, must be deaf to all human reasonings and exhortation.

We are placed by the Christian religion in a condition for attaining everlasting happiness. The *perfecting* that condition by the natural and spiritual means, which are placed in our power, depends in some sort upon ourselves. One of two things must *certainly* happen; we must either use those means and make a continual progress towards perfection, or we shall neglect them, and gradually sink into a state of spiritual debasement,

which, if not remedied, may end in a state of utter reprobation. To stand still, to make no progress forward, and yet to be secured from backsliding, the very law of our nature forbids. There is no middle course. Either Satan will subdue us, or we shall subdue him. If we resist him, his attacks become less frequent, and less urgent, his power of hurting us decreases, and the ever blessed influences of the Comforter increase, till, at length, we are assured of the final victory, and removed to that country "where the wicked cease from troubling," and where (the purpose of temptation being accomplished) temptation itself shall cease. But those who are overpowered in the conflict, those who yield to temptation, become once more the bond-servants of their original master; and, as they are now sinning in spite of knowledge, in spite of the mercies of Christ, and the influences of the Holy Spirit, it is evident that their case is more *hopeless* than before, not *desperate* certainly, for, while their lives continue, there is still *hope* in God's mercies through Christ, but more miserable, more dangerous, more defenceless, than before. Had they never been enlightened, had they never been redeemed, had they never been sanctified, there might have been some excuse, because "the Lord knoweth whereof we are made, he remembereth that we are but dust;" but they have been redeemed, sanctified, enlightened, and he will henceforth deal with them, not as with mere human beings in their natural state, and therefore "to be beaten with few stripes," but as with creatures who have been called to a knowledge of his will, who have liberty, privileges, assistance, means, towards their salvation. But his gifts have been despised, his promises have been forgotten, his worship and his holy sacrament have been neglected, his enemy, the rebel and apostate spirit, has been again admitted into, and enthroned in the heart; the suggestions of the Holy Spirit have been in vain, and the whole man, which should have been "the temple of the Holy Ghost," is made the habitation of devils. What wonder is there, that creatures so ungrateful, so corrupted, so

backsliding, God should abandon to their own imaginations? What wonder, that they should be given over to serve that master, whom they have preferred to their almighty Father? What wonder, that "the last state of that man should be worse than the first?" The means appointed for their redemption have been tried, means adequate to the purpose, and they have been tried in vain; "henceforth there remains no farther sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment." They sink lower and lower in the scale of spiritual beings, till they are gradually qualified for that state of unutterable anguish, in which their chiefest misery will be, to have been once enlightened, once called, once redeemed, once visited with the knowledge of Christ.

My beloved brethren, this is a dreadful picture of the ultimate state of the relapsing victim of Satan. But it is better to reflect on the description now, than to endure the reality hereafter. There may be (which God forbid) some amongst us, who have either in belief or in practice become apostates from the Christian religion, who have "left their first love," and who have turned again to the abominable idols of their own affections and lusts. To them the text speaks in a voice of warning, while the general promises of the gospel forbid even them to despair. But the *remnant of hope*, which is yet vouchsafed to them, is in the mercies of Christ upon their sincere struggles for a renewed deliverance. The injunction given by Christ to one of the apostate churches in the Revelation, is, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." The injunction to fallen individuals is the same, "remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works," and there is still a hope. You have fallen gradually into wickedness, you may arise gradually to higher and higher attainments in righteousness and faith. The same God, who upon your repentance and faith in the first instance

cast out the devil, has still the will, upon your renewed faith and repentance, to cast out the seven more wicked spirits, and to cleanse you from the abominations with which they have filled you.

But, whether these extreme cases of falling off apply to us or no, there is to every one of us a lesson of the most awful warning furnished in the text. The deliverance from Satan, and the enjoyment of spiritual privileges, do not secure us from the possibility of forfeiting those gifts, and of reversing that deliverance. We are never secure on this side the grave. We may lessen our danger continually, so long as we earnestly apply ourselves to work out our salvation; but every step of that work must be "with fear and trembling," for a moment's forgetfulness, a single thought may renew in some degree our slavery to Satan, and lead to consequences not now foreseen, which may end in total estrangement from God.

But if this watchfulness is necessary, what shall we say of those who never watch at all, who are indifferent to those attacks which are unceasingly made upon their faith and practice, and the consequences of which may be eternal? It is a spiritual blindness and carelessness, which is unaccountable in rational beings. Such a man is warned sufficiently by the text, and by the voice of all Scripture. Once more we call upon him to consider his ways, before it is too late; this may be the last warning which he may receive; he is in a state of danger; he is surrounded and besieged by invisible enemies; he may be numbered amongst the dead; "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead."

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THE SORROWS AND SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST IN HIS INCARNATE STATE.

THE human mind is the seat of a variety of passions, that prompt humanity, provoke indignation, and excite compassion. It can alternately melt into sympathy, and burn with anger; can be dissolved with commiseration, or recoil with detestation; be softened and allured with love, or alarmed with fear; according to

the nature of the object which the eye beholds, or the imagination contemplates.

To excite, and to sanctify, these various emotions in the human heart, for purposes conducive to its noblest interests, the gospel presents to our view one of the most tragical histories ever left upon record, and one of the most affecting objects that the human eye ever beheld; that of "Christ crucified."

His whole life was full of sorrow; but it is in its awful close that you behold those complicated distresses, which, like the conflux of neighbouring streams pouring their waters into one common current, and swelling it with impetuous fury, all met at the cross of Jesus, and overwhelmed him with unutterable anguish. Scenes of calamity, the ravages of death, the sorrows of the afflicted, the infirmities of his friends, and the obstinacy of his enemies, had often before heaved his compassionate breast with many a sigh, and made tears of sympathy and compassion flow down his cheeks: he wept at the grave of Lazarus; and while anticipating the approaching doom of Jerusalem, where he was soon to be condemned and crucified, "when he beheld the city he wept over it," and uttered that most pathetic lamentation, that declared its guilt, and was prophetic of its ruin.

But his most exquisite sorrows and most pungent griefs were reserved for the last; sorrows, that were to wound a heart formed for the most refined sensibility, and anguish that was to be occasioned by a hand he had never felt before.

On the fatal night on which he was betrayed by Judas, and apprehended by a band of armed ruffians who had long thirsted for his blood, he had retired from his disciples for the purpose of solemn intercourse with heaven, to a solitary and favourite spot, near the brook Cedron, and in the garden of Gethsemane; as if to intimate, that as in a garden, sin was first introduced, in a similar spot the Messiah should bleed for its expiation and its remedy; and that a garden should never be seen without reminding us of the melancholy catastrophe of man's fall, and the glorious event of his redemption by the Son of God. The spot was conse-

crated by the presence of Jesus, and known to Judas by the frequent visits his Master made to it: "for Jesus oft-times resorted thither." Here, while his disciples were sleeping, "his soul was sorrowful even unto death." And now, he who had so often comforted others needs himself consolation; which he receives from an angelic messenger, despatched from heaven for that express purpose. Prostrate on the cold ground, while no human hand touched him, nor any visible agent was nigh, the inward anguish of his soul so wrung and tortured the feelings of his human frame, that a preternatural sweat exuded from his pores; for, "he sweat great drops of blood falling down to the ground." The bitter cup, in the hand of inflexible justice, is presented to his view, filled with every ingredient of sorrow, which the sin of man, the malice of hell, the rage of the Jews, and the wrath of Heaven, could throw into it. While his human nature shudders, and feels the most agonizing sensations in all its parts; to show that the most exquisite sensibility is compatible with the most perfect submission; his soul is all resignation, and neither sinks nor is dismayed beneath the oppressive load. The language of the most profound acquiescence is spoken amidst "strong crying and groans and tears." "Father, thy will be done," says the meek and submissive Jesus. "Rise, let us be going!" says the illustrious sufferer, ready to meet the storm, and seek the enemy that sought his life.

Behold him condemned for crimes, of which he was innocent; and recompensed, with the sentence of a shameful death, for actions that merited the honours and empire of the universe! See! the appointed Judge of heaven and earth stand at the bar of the Roman governor! who, contrary to the remonstrances of his own wife and the dictates of conscience, yielding to the mean impulse of popularity, and the clamours of an enraged multitude, prefers a robber before the innocent and illustrious Son of God; whom he consigns over to the charge of a merciless band of military executioners, who stain the pretorium with the most sacred and

innocent blood ever shed there; and at last sentences to be crucified, contrary to every law of humanity, justice, and mercy.

The purple robe and mock sceptre, with which they derided *Him*, who holds the sceptre of universal empire, and who decketh himself with light as with a garment; the casting of lots for his seamless coat; and plating a crown of thorns, intending at once to disgrace and torture the sacred brow, worthy to be adorned with the brightest diadem; were circumstances of trivial ignominy and sorrow, compared with the tragic scene, to which they were all to lead, and in which they were at last to terminate. After having suffered such pain and loss of blood at the pillar, where "the ploughers ploughed upon his back and made long furrows;" after having been blindfolded, spit upon, and smitten on the face till "it was marred more than any man's, and his form, more than the sons of men;" his enemies, with hearts studious in malice, and inventive in torture, oblige him to bear his cross up the ascent to Calvary. He arrives at the fatal spot—his hands and feet are pierced with nails; and thus fastened, the ignominious tree is forced into the ground, with a motion which must have given an excruciating shock to his whole frame.

"Behold the man!" What a spectacle to heaven and earth! His sacred body, bearing visible impressions of antecedent torture and outrage, is so extended on the fatal tree, as to be convulsed and filled with agony in every part: his flesh, torn by the brutal chastisement he received at the bloody pillar: his sacred temples lacerated by that disgraceful crown, the thorns of which, by their pungency, made the blood, in numerous gushing streams, flow from his head; his face bearing the livid marks of that extravagant and vulgar brutality, that durst smite a countenance, the lineaments of which were calculated to command respect, or charm the beholder with every lovely expression of lamb-like meekness and patience;—such, in the moment of his ignominious suspension on the accursed tree, was the affecting spectacle which the crucified Jesus exhibited to men and angels.—*De Courcy.*

## SERMON XLIX.

GLORIOUS DISPLAYS OF GOSPEL GRACE.

BY THE REV. ROWLAND HILL, A. M.

*"This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come."*—Matt. xxiv. 14.

IF ever my mind felt the solemn weight of those words of the good old patriarch, "surely this is none other but the house of God and the gate of heaven," it is on this present occasion. Can we suppose that so many of God's ministers and people should find it in their hearts to assemble together on such a glorious design, and He not be present with them? O surely not! we believe him to be in the midst of us. Nor can any thing short of his special presence crown our labours with success. What a mercy, then, that we live in a day in which the Lord's promise is, we hope, to be remarkably verified, "Behold I am with you always, even to the end of the world!"

Matters of salvation are of infinite importance. The glory of bringing souls to Christ is the greatest honour God can confer upon us. The salvation of one soul is of more worth than a thousand worlds. My dearest brethren in the ministry, may God fill us with the like ardent desires to those which warmed the apostle's heart, when he was constrained to declare to his Galatian hearers, that "He travailed in birth again till Christ was formed in them." And while you thus assemble upon the business of sending the gospel to heathen nations, may you, on your departure, beloved brethren, from this our British Jerusalem, be so filled with the spirit and power from above, as that you may be a thousand times more successful, not only in promoting good among those whom you are

more immediately concerned to serve in the ministry of the word, but also for the conversion of the poor heathens in your neighbourhood; for O, what crowds of heathens, and worse than heathens, though under the Christian name, are everywhere to be found amongst us! And why may we not expect that such a fire shall now be kindled as that not only wonders be done among the nations that know not God, but that, even in our own land, it shall be our portion also to be indulged with a remarkable revival of the power of religion, "a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord!"

What littleness and insignificance are stamped upon all the things of time and sense, when compared to such blessings as these! What avail the things that are temporal in comparison of those that are eternal! Here are glories that words can never reach, nor tongue express; and I wonder not at the sensations of one happy mind, who, though quite in the agonies of dissolving nature, and beyond the power of giving an intelligible answer to any question asked, yet, with a hope full of immortality though in the jaws of death, felt such blessedness upon his mind as constrained him to lift up his arms in triumph, and with a very heaven on his countenance thrice to repeat, O the glories! O the glories! O the glories!

Now to be made the happy instruments of conveying so much felicity, in such solemn circumstances, as this dying man felt, what an honour! While we live,

may God fill our hearts with these surprising glories, that they may be our cordial in our departing moments; and may divine mercy teach a world of sinners to seek the same!

We shall not then blush at what the world calls the irregularity of our conduct; when an apostolic warmth of zeal shall make every minister a missionary around his own neighbourhood; and when, touched with the sacred tenderness of Christian compassion, he can never be contented, while on earth, to leave a single sinner within his reach unconverted to God.

A poor sinner in her dying moments, requesting that a despised servant of Jesus Christ might visit her before her departure, heard some one ridicule her choice, that she should call in one of such a methodistical character, a common street preacher, and field preacher: roused with zeal and gratitude to God, for the instrument of her conversion, she said to those who stood around her, "Let who will despise him, I will thank him before men and angels, that he went out into the streets and lanes of our city, to bring my lost wandering soul to God." I drop the hint to encourage you, my brethren, in the blessed work of field preaching, that we may be instant in season, and out of season, and do the work of an evangelist. But I am now to follow the plan designed from the text. "Lord, help me!" The word before us gives us to understand, that as wonders have in former ages been done by the gospel, so in future still greater glories shall be accomplished: nor in our day is "the Lord's arm shortened that it cannot save, or his ear waxed dull, that it cannot hear." Nay, the longer we live, the manifestation of still greater glories ought to be expected; for the time is still to come, when the "knowledge of God," as says the voice of prophecy, "shall cover the earth, as the waters do the sea:" yea, "the kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and his Christ:" while saints and angels wait with holy impatience, were it possible, to rend the vault of heaven at the arrival of the time when that song, more univer-

sally than ever, shall be sung, "Hallelujah! for the Lord omnipotent reigneth: King of kings, and Lord of lords!"

I mean not merely to show that the gospel of the kingdom was preached in all ages, since the fall of man; but more especially to note the outpourings of the Spirit in different ages, under the divine manifestation of mercy to mankind that our hearts may be enlarged, and our hopes quickened, on this present occasion.

No sooner had our first parents brought sin into the world by their transgression, and scarcely had divine justice pronounced the curse, when sovereign mercy dropped the gracious promise, "the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head:" thus was the gospel first preached in paradise itself; they to whom it was preached, we trust, lived upon the promise given, and looked with longing expectation after it; they even seemed to conclude they had obtained the accomplishment when Eve, upon the birth of her first son, to render the passage more literally, cried, "I have gotten a man, the Lord."

This we may call the first spring of mercy to fallen man; but we find it awfully limited to a narrow channel throughout the antediluvian world; while such floods of iniquity overspread the face of the earth that God himself is described as "repenting that he had made man," yea, as being on this account "grieved at his heart." In the family of Noah alone was the knowledge and fear of God preserved.

But now the stream that began to flow from the most early period of time gradually increases, and continues upon the increase, like a spreading river, till its wide extended currents open themselves into the bosom of the ocean.

God separated Abraham and his family early for that purpose. The faith of that renowned patriarch was strong and clear respecting the person and glories of Christ. Faith is a long-sighted grace; for, notwithstanding the distance of time, "he rejoiced to see Christ's day, he saw it and was glad." Paul declares that the same faith which justified Abraham justifies believers in Jesus in all ages; that

the blessings of the same salvation are to be imparted to us also, if blessed with the same faith that dwelt in him, who is the father of the faithful. And, indeed, all the great works done by the worthies of old are described in the eleventh of the Hebrews as done by faith in the Lord Jesus, which alone rendered them acceptable in the sight of God, for "without faith it is impossible to please him."

A glorious increase was to be given to this family,—the more they were persecuted the more they multiplied. Divine ordinances, instituted by God himself, were given them, that they might be kept apart from all other nations, and preserved from their idolatry, and might be at the same time instructed to understand and to wait for the kingdom of the Lord Jesus; this was the casket in which the jewel of divine truth was preserved till it shone forth with all its lustre under the gospel dispensation. The first display of a more immediate outpouring of the Spirit of God seemed to be when the outstretched arm of the Lord brought this his Israel out of Egypt. In reference to this period, the Lord thus expresses himself concerning them: "Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, thus saith the Lord, I remember thee; the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown; Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase." Jer. ii. 2. And, O that God would now create in the hearts of many, the same holy and devoted zeal, leading them to take pity upon heathen lands, that they may go forth, for his dear name's sake, in a wilderness, in a land that is not sown! While God proposes the question, Who is he that will go for me? may the ready answer be found in the hearts of many prepared by himself, "Here am I, send me."

We next notice other revivals that succeeded: Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun, stand highly recorded in sacred writ. Though sin kept the generation of their contemporaries from the promised land—they rotted through unbelief in the wilderness—yet nothing could affect the lives of those

men of renown, or prevent them from possessing their desired Canaan. Great was the revival of religion in their days, and much good was done by their instrumentality: God was eminently with them, and they acknowledged him in all their ways. No Canaanitish foe could prevent their glorious progress; they were conquerors, yea, more than conquerors, because they believed on their God. And cannot God give the like precious faith in the present undertaking? When God says, "Let there be light," is it in the power of all hell to create darkness? When he says, "Arise, shine," shall not omnipotence prevail? We triumph while we believe in God. "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Once my mind had its doubts respecting a mission to the heathen: unbelief said there were a thousand difficulties in the way. I thank God that my soul was made to blush when that text was brought to my recollection, "God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham." Now, what is so inanimate as a stone? Had the metaphor been taken from trees, or any other part of the vegetable creation, there we might have discovered the existence, at least, of vegetable life; but what power can command stones to live, but the power of the living God?

We want men for this business, Calebs and Joshuas: such as these only ought to go forth, and such only as are armed out of God's armoury shall succeed. Some that have worn their own earthly armour have fatally proved how ill it answers their design; it interrupts their agility, and frustrates their intent; but the armour which God's people are commanded to wear proves just the reverse. The helmet formed by man, though it adds a tallness to the stature, and a dignity to the person, yet must be supported by the head which wears it; but the divine helmet supports the head, it lifts the wearer up with a hope full of immortality. The shield of an earthly warrior is burdensome to the arm that supports it; but the Christian feels that it is not the strength of his arm which supports the shield, but that it is the

marvellous virtue of the shield to support his arm. The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, is a living sword; the life of God is in it, and it shall not be directed by the hand, but it shall direct the hand of the Christian, and shall bathe itself in the blood of all his spiritual enemies. O our God, give us but this panoply, and "one shall chase a thousand, and two shall put ten thousand to flight;" let us have but the heroism of the gospel and the work is done! The promises of the word of God are gloriously large; may our minds be impressed with their vast extent, and then what has been done shall be again done. May the Lord rouse the spirits of his people, and fill you, beloved brother ministers, with a greater and more enlarged expectation of doing good; and the very expectation of doing good will enable you to accomplish it. Let nothing discourage you. Behold, God is your salvation! He goes before you, and he also is your rearward. Your front and your rear are both defended by Omnipotence. The devil has, therefore, no place left for his attack, How glorious the defence of the children and ministers of our God!

Several other revivals of the power of religion next appeared under the different governments of the judges of Israel. Here, at times, God's people lamented their sins, and under their national humiliation they sought him, and he was found by them.

Time would fail us to trace the like divine displays of grace through the regency of Samuel, and the first part of the reign of Saul, and the increasing glories which rested on the church of God while the sceptre was intrusted in David's hands. We hasten to the time of Solomon. Then the reflected light given through that dispensation shone with its fullest splendour; but, like the shining of the moon, which gradually withdraws her humble light till she totally disappears and hides herself behind the sun, so we shall find that these gracious revivals gradually declined till Jesus the Sun of righteousness arose, creating the gospel day of grace, and adorning it with all the glories of his great salvation.

Solomon's reign was filled with wonders. We trace, however, but the more pure and chaste part of his history, while the Lord was truly with him.

He began his reign with divine communications with his God, and while he maintained communion with him he prospered; his noblest wish was to build the temple. It was during that period that the heart of this prince was fully devoted to the Lord; his wisdom, his riches, and his honours were entirely dedicated to promote the glory of his God: with zeal he completes the work which God has given him to perform. And now the temple is to be dedicated to Him for whose service it was built. And, O what a day is this, when all Israel appears before the Lord like a multitude which no man could number! The king himself leads the devotions of his people, and God miraculously declares his approbation of the solemn work, while flakes of holy fire descend on the sacrifice already prepared for the divine service, and the glory of God fills all the temple, and constrains the people to rejoice with reverence and godly fear.

And can we suppose that a mere outward and visible manifestation of the glory of God was all that the great Majesty of heaven designed hereby? O surely no! He that is as a refiner's fire to the hearts of his people, was now doubtless working upon their hearts also, by his invisible agency, that he might prepare them for himself, and then take them to his glory. In short, does not this appear as the great pentecost of the Old Testament church, similar in its nature and effects to that recorded in the New Testament, when cloven tongues of fire rested upon the heads of the apostles, a visible sign of their preparation for their important ministry, that through their instrumentality great grace might rest upon the hearts of thousands, to prepare them for glory?

And, O what views further open to our minds when we meditate on the multitudes of glorified spirits already brought to God under these different outpourings of the Spirit of grace! They are long ago safely landed, and are waiting with

holy joy for those that are now coming, and for others that shall yet come, till God shall have accomplished the number of his elect, and finished his great work of the salvation of millions of mankind.

After the days of Solomon, we find, through the conduct of wicked rulers, awful declensions among the people; but still different revivals are to be traced. As through the influence of bad kings all the works of sin and the devil were promoted, so through the instrumentality of good kings God again revived his work in the midst of them.

During the reign of Asa, there was a glorious display of the revival of religion. Azariah the prophet faithfully discharges his duty as a preacher before his king, while the king, with no less devotedness, attends to the word; with all diligence he sets himself upon the work of a universal reformation, destroys every abominable idol out of the land, and again erects the altar of the Lord, which in the times of idolatry had been broken down. He gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the stragglers with them out of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and out of Simeon, "for they fell to him in abundance when they saw the Lord was with him; and they offered unto the Lord of the spoil which they had brought, seven hundred oxen, and seven thousand sheep; and they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart, and with all their soul; and they swore unto the Lord with a loud voice, with shouting, with trumpets, and with cornets; and all Judah rejoiced at the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them, and the Lord gave them rest round about." 2 Chron. xv. 8. 16. Now, how many precious souls were saved under this revival a future day alone can declare.

Again we trace another display of the power of religion in the reign of Jehoshaphat; or rather a continuation of the same good work carried on by the son so happily begun in the days of his father. He reforms the land from the remains of idolatry, and appoints godly judges to govern in different cities; and when he

was in danger from the kingdom of Moab, he "sought the Lord with all diligence," proclaimed a fast, and called all Israel and Judah to attend to it. They came with their wives and their little ones; they repented before the Lord; they acknowledged their wickedness, and made a solemn renunciation of those sins which bring down the wrath of God on his people. Then the God of Israel protected them; and then they appeared glorious as the Israel of God, indeed. When shall England be blessed with such solemn fasts as these? When shall we prove that we meet in earnest for national humiliation, that national reformation may be effected thereby? When shall our great men lead the work, so as to be among the first who shall renounce and abandon those evils, that have caused the righteous God in judgment to bring forth his vengeance against us? Time would fail were we yet to proceed further to show the blessed and prosperous state of religion that next appeared under the reign of good king Hezekiah; how, immediately when he began to reign, he opened the doors of the house of God; restored religion, which had been brought into sad decay through the wretchedness of his father Ahaz; commanded the priests and Levites diligently to seek the Lord and do his will; directed that the house of God should be cleansed, and all the divinely appointed sacrifices should be duly offered up.

Again we find him calling all Israel and Judah together to celebrate a solemn passover, inviting them by a most persuasive letter to come and seek the Lord God, and bending the hearts of multitudes to obey the summons; for we are told, "the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king, and that divers of Asher, and Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem." And no wonder, when God himself constrains the assembly to draw near, that a peculiar blessing is given to such waiting tribes. Read the history of this great reformation at large, as recorded in the 29th, 30th, and 31st of the second of Chronicles: there you will see the feelings of this

great man's heart; he conceived himself not a king for himself, but a king deputed of God to promote his praise, and to do his will as a vicegerent of God's own theocracy. O, the glories of such a kingdom, under such a government, with God himself in the midst of it!

The last revival under the reigns of the kings of Judah was but of short duration. We are told how diligently young Josiah set his heart to seek the Lord; and nothing in his reign deserves so much our notice as the tenderness of his spirit in reading the word of God. This set him immediately on the work of God. Once more religion lifts up its now languid head; and the solemn pass-over appointed by the king is attended with the blessing and presence of God. Again they renew their covenant with him; and yet they were (though, as we learn, Jer. iii. 6, 10, many among them turned but feignedly) enabled for a season to abide by their solemn vows; for, during all the days of Josiah, "they departed not from following the Lord, the God of their fathers." 2 Chron. xxiv. 33.

And now a long night ensues. Through a space of near seven hundred years we read in the inspired records (excepting what is referred to in the forty-fourth Psalm and some other places) but of one revival of the power of the glorious faithfulness of the Jewish church in days of dreadful persecution of religion, and that was under the government of Ezra and Nehemiah on the return of Israel from their Baylonish captivity. Let us a little investigate the glories of that revival. The people had polluted themselves by their unlawful connexions while captives in a heathen land, and even after their return from the captivity. These, by the command of God, were to be renounced: and yet, what dearer to nature than the wife of a man's bosom? But Ezra, the holy reformer, was at a point with the people: the command was explicit; wives taken unlawfully are now to be rejected, and they yield obedience to what nature would call this severe injunction of the Lord.

Whatever may be dear to us, may our

Lord and God be dearer still!—yea, dearer and dearer day by day! And, O that Christ may find out for us, on this present work, those that can forsake houses, lands, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, and all for his dear sake! And why should any refuse to forsake such low things as these for Him who forsook his heaven, his glory, and hid not his face from shame and spitting, and at last laid down his life to ransom us from the hell that sin most righteously deserves, that he might make us partakers with himself of blessedness in eternal glory? I will make a few observations further on this last revival of religion before the coming of our Lord. The word of God was again brought forth into public notice. Ezra the scribe stands on a pulpit of wood from the sunrising till the noonday; for six hours at one time he reads and expounds the word of God, assisted by twelve others of the princes of Israel, six of them standing on the one side, and six of them on the other; thus they laboured to instruct the people; for "they read in the book the law of God distinctly; and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." Nehemiah viii. 8. Nor were they tired with the length of the sermon: no; a weeping congregation will not speedily be weaned of the word of God; and it was a strong evidence on their behalf that God was with them of a truth, that their hearts were melted before the Lord, and their eyes were a fountain of tears.

O, what a refreshing sight would it be to us, my brethren, if such were the state of our congregations!—to manifest such tenderness of heart, and such readiness at once to obey all that they hear from the sacred word of truth! Sure I am that no sight is so glorious as the presence of God upon a worshipping congregation; nor any thing so animating to the heart of a minister as when he perceives that the word he preaches comes to the hearts of his hearers, with "the demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

After this period, till the coming of Christ, a gross darkness for the most part covered the earth, religion seemed sunk

into formality, while the institutions of God, at the same time, were wretchedly blended with the inventions of men.

The spirit of prophecy was now totally withdrawn: no zealous reformers made their appearance, nor were any indications given of the people lamenting over their deserted state, or longing for the returning mercies of the Lord.

It is observed, that the darkest moment in all the night is the moment which precedes the first break of day; and blessed be God, we are now to contemplate the glories of that bright day created by the presence of Him who is "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person."

But there is somewhat in the progress of this light which demands our attention. We find some wonderful stirrings of conscience (and it is well when God sets conscience to work) under the preaching of John the Baptist. Plain was his appearance, but powerful was his word; his business was to "prepare the way of the Lord." If, however, his word seemed to have but a transient effect upon the minds of his hearers, one could not but suppose that when the Son of God commenced a preacher, wonders indeed would be wrought, and that not a hearer could resist when the incarnate Jehovah delivered his own word. But what was accomplished by the preaching of our Lord? His word was, indeed, with authority; and his astonished hearers were constrained to acknowledge "never man spake like this man." But, notwithstanding all this, and though he had multitudes for his hearers, insomuch that he was obliged to take the mountain for his pulpit, though he went about from village to village, and from city to city, to preach the gospel of the kingdom, we find no more after the crucifixion than a hundred and twenty souls, collected together in an upper room for fear of the Jews. Where were the thousands that attended the ministry of the Baptist? Where were the multitudes that attended our Lord, and were fed by his miracles? The glorious power was not yet revealed: what effectually does the work: "the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not

yet glorified." He must first "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." It was not meet that the blessing should be vouchsafed till the curse was removed; but when once the great work was finished,—when Jesus had ascended into his heavenly kingdom, according to the glorious word, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates! and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in,"—when he had finished his conquests, and had ascended up on high, leading even captivity captive,—then came the blessed time when he would "give his gifts to men, even the rebellious, and come and dwell amongst them." Thus, having prepared the mansions for his people, he next sends down his Spirit to prepare his people for those mansions. O, the glories of that sacred day!—"behold now, indeed, the tabernacle of God is with man!" According to our Lord's direction, the disciples waited at Jerusalem for the fulfilment of his promise; and, lo, he comes!—their understandings are enlightened to understand the Scriptures; their hearts are inflamed, and they preach the word with faithfulness and power. Before, neither the thunders of John, preaching in the wilderness, nor yet the words of grace that dropped from the lips of Jesus Christ himself, could effectually impress the minds almost of any; but now the preaching of a poor set of illiterate fishermen melts the adamant hearts of the murderers of Christ, and brings them by thousands to submit to his righteous and merciful sceptre. On the very first day after the day of Pentecost was fully come, we hear of three thousand; at another time, we hear the numbers increased to five thousand; then, again, that "believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women;" and, further, "the number of disciples multiplied greatly;" and, what was the greatest wonder of all wonders, that "a great multitude of the priests were obedient to the faith." Yea, we hear of whole villages, towns, cities, and countries, which at once were subjugated to the Lord Jesus: "so mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed." Now was the time that a nation should be born

at once; and, as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. O, the power that then went with the word! Those that heard were at once pricked to the heart; their cry directly was, "What must I do to be saved?" and the answer, as directly given, was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." How must the decency, as we suppose, of religious worship have been interrupted thereby—but, O, blessed interruption!—when God himself wrought so gloriously, and so many souls were brought into divine subjection to the cross of Christ! May God send us such blessed interruptions in all our congregations! O, they are glorious!

It may be asked what became of the multitudes that attended the ministry of our Lord, and his harbinger, John. It strikes me that many of these had now their convictions revived, and were found among the happy thousands who received the gospel dispensation. The seed was first sown by John, and by our glorious Lord, and afterward, being watered by the descent of the Holy Ghost, sprung up to the glory of God! What encouragement this to every sincere minister to be diligent in his work! Secret convictions may a long time abide in the heart before a thorough conversion to God is effected. "Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days." We shall reap if we faint not.

Ofentimes, when I have been engaged in preaching, and perhaps in the contemptible work of street preaching, too, when I have thought that the whole town was dead in trespasses and sins, some few secret ones have been found—allow the plain expression,—and I left them like nest eggs. I visited them again, and the numbers soon increased, till the little one became a thousand.

But what remarkable evidence is given, by all these revivals, that the work in which we are engaged is, indeed, the work of God!—"not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord;" for what was the doctrine, especially in the great revival on the day of Pentecost? The plain simple preaching of the cross of Christ. And who were the instru-

ments? A set of plain illiterate fishermen. Better, a thousand times, to have the simplicity of a Peter, than the eloquence of a Longinus, if we are but made useful to the souls of our fellow creatures: that preaching is always the best that best answers the end of preaching; let us, therefore, go forth preaching, as it is worded in the text, "the gospel of the kingdom;" and that, too, with simplicity, and godly sincerity, and not with fleshly wisdom,—and what has been done, shall be done. God will ever stand by his own truth; and, if he be for us, who can be against us? Preaching the gospel of the kingdom does all the work. I hate the pride of such as would fain attempt to set aside this glorious dispensation, and are ever attempting to establish what they call the powers of reason in its stead, and are ever boasting of the mighty things that it can effect: had they, however, a little more of the same faculty they pretend so plentifully to possess, they would not expose themselves by such assertions; for what can reason do while under the influence of corrupted nature? Nay, say they, it is *passion* and *appetite*, not *reason*, that then govern the man; but if passion and appetite prevail over the human understanding, so that good is avoided as an evil, and evil sought after as a good, and these furnish our reasoning powers with their materials, we may easily conclude what will be the conduct and the choice; nay, say they, shall it be said that a drunkard acts according to reason? Certainly not; but he acts according to *his* reason. And does a man in a violent passion act according to reason? According to that which he, at that instant of time, calls reason, he certainly does. And both the drunkard and the passionate man will give you a thousand reasons, as they call them, for their conduct; and, however badly they reason, it is reason to them; and, however wrongly they may be guided, yet their reason was their guide; and it is not likely that a wrong guide will lead a man right: in short, every man's reason directs him to seek after happiness; and, while the carnal mind supposes there is happiness to be had in the indulgence

of lust and passion, reason will lead that road. In short, sound reason can never be ingrafted but upon real religion.

The fact proves itself. Where are the converts of these boasted rational preachers? A fig for all their pretensions to wisdom, if they cannot produce one single sample of a precious soul being converted from sin to God thereby!

I bring forward the character of the great Mr. Whitfield on this occasion; I hope you do not blush for me, that I mention his name on this subject, for verily, I shall not blush for myself. God gave him a most enlarged mind, liberated him from all the wretched trammels of education; he knew no party, his glory was to preach the gospel to every creature; bigotry his soul abhorred; and, like a second Samson, he has so made her main supporting pillars to totter, that you and I, my brethren, rejoice that she trembles to the very foundation, and live in daily hopes that her complete destruction shall complete our joy.

Now I will not say, I thank the devil for any thing; but I will say, I thank God for that permissive providence whereby that great man, being turned out of the churches, esteemed it his duty to preach at large. His first attempt was among the poor Kingswood colliers: I defy any missionary upon earth to find a darker spot, or to visit a more benighted people; these he called out of the holes and dens of the earth, and to these he preached "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." And O it was a lovely sight, to behold the glorious effect! Eyes unaccustomed to weep before, now began to flow with the tears of repentance unto life, white streaks appearing thereby on their black faces, now turned up towards heaven, praying for mercy and forgiveness; knees unaccustomed to prayer before, are now bended down in fervent devotion before God; and their lives well and wisely regulated by the power of that grace which had done such wonders on their hearts. Now, mind what these fastidious sons of pride and self-conceit had to say on this occasion: to be sure Whitfield has done good among these low sort

of people. Now we cannot thank them for their compliment, as it is given with such a wretched ill grace; but a higher panegyric cannot be framed. We generally suppose he is the best physician that cures the most desperate diseases. And we should also suppose, that he is the best minister, notwithstanding the *convenient* terms of methodist and enthusiast, that cures the diseases of the mind, in its most desperate state.

Let us try how some of these rationalists in religion (as they *humbly* wish to be thought) would be likely to succeed on a similar occasion. Let them seek for some other colliery of the like description; there take one of their nicely composed paper pop-guns, and read it among the multitude. I would willingly and gladly carry the stool behind them, to see what sort of figures they would cut in their attempts to reform. I hate such silly pride, and it is best corrected by the lash of ridicule and contempt.

But a part of our plan is yet to be considered. To trace what has been done since the apostles' days, time would by no means allow: and successes of a later date have already been well presented before you. We have now to encourage ourselves from the promises and prophecies of the word of God, of the glory that shall be revealed. The text itself gives blessed encouragement to our expectations, "The gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." And what may we not yet hope for, when the Lord himself has said to his well-beloved Son, "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession?" In Isaiah, prophecy abounds to encourage our hopes. God shall say "to the north, Give up; to the south, Hold not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the end of the earth." (Isa. xliii. 6.) "For I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth. In an acceptable time have I heard thee, in a day of salvation have I helped thee, I will preserve thee, and give thee for a

covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; that thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; and to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves." (Isa. xlix. 6, 8, 9.) And again in the 60th of the same prophet, how gloriously the Gentile church is called to "Arise and shine, since her light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon her." Even while "darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people, the Lord should arise upon Zion; and the Gentiles should come to her light, and kings to the brightness of his rising," that "her sons should come from far, and her daughters should be nursed by her side." At your leisure read the whole of the chapter, and take encouragement therefrom, to set about this blessed work of God, with all your hearts, and all your souls, and all your strength. Convinced therefore, from the word of prophecy, that greater things are to be done than ever yet have been done, let us encourage ourselves in our God, waiting with holy expectation till other nations "shall cast away their idols, that they have made, to the moles and to the bats, and turn unto the Lord." Yes, my beloved, may not even we, that now compose this solemn assembly, live in humble hopes, that ere long we may see some devoted missionary returning, in holy triumph, to this his native land, with some detested idol, that has robbed the great Jehovah of his honour, renowned and adhered to, by its once deluded votaries, now, in the midst of the congregation, exhibited the sportive triumph of all our hearts? And, further, may we not expect to behold some humble convert himself, blessing God in the midst of us, for the work of this glorious day, in consequence of which his soul was brought out of darkness, to behold the marvellous light of the gospel of Christ?

And we have recent instances before us, that greatly encourage us to the work. I am very glad to mention the conduct of our Moravian brethren in this respect; their zeal, their patience, and disinterested diligence in the like work, are beyond the praise that words can reach, and our gracious Lord has astonishingly blessed their

attempts: some of our West India islands have been surprisingly evangelized by them; the inhospitable climates of Greenland and Labrador have received the glad tidings of salvation, through their instrumentality: neither the burning regions of the south, nor yet the frozen forests of the north, could ever impede their amazing love for souls. A nobler, a more disinterested example we cannot follow than theirs; I hope we shall all feel it our privilege to keep up the most friendly correspondence with them. We will thank them heartily to tell us how they did the good, that we may go and do likewise: a better way we cannot devise than theirs; for it has answered the end; souls have been brought to Christ thereby; they that do not speak most honourably of their mission do themselves the greatest dishonour. But I will take the liberty to remark one odd fancy of theirs; they suppose that the soul of a poor man is equally valuable, in the sight of God, as the soul of a rich man, and they have ever proved it, by going among the most abject of mankind.

What has been also done by our own government, by sending out some valuable missionaries to the East Indies, deserves a token of acknowledgment; and I heartily pray that the Arminian Methodists, so called in their mission, may send a free grace gospel throughout the world; and the late attempt set on foot by our Baptist brethren, I trust, will be crowned with large success; and though our difference about the ordinance of baptism may constrain us to act in different lines, and they cannot permit us to communicate with them, yet we are determined to be up with them, for both they, and others, if they love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, shall be most heartily welcome, whenever they please, to communicate with us.

Our design is all the same: no matter for the name of the boat that ferries over the poor benighted sinner into the land of gospel light and liberty, provided the blessed work be but accomplished. I hate bigotry with my soul; and while so many gospel ministers of different denominations assemble together for the same purpose, I still hope to live to see it sub-

sist no more, to divide the Christian from the Christian; while each of us serves God in his own line, why cannot we love as brethren?

Let names, and sects, and parties fall,  
And Jesus Christ be all in all.

I confess, in the simplicity of my heart, that some expressions have dropped from my lips, which I never designed on this very solemn occasion; I am sure your patience and candour will instruct you to forgive; but we must be serious, serious indeed, while we conclude with some remarks, on what ought to be the character of the missionaries themselves.

And what manner of persons should these indeed be, in all holy conversation and godliness! How full of that heavenly mindedness and spiritual mindedness which shall raise them so far above the world, as though they had scarce an existence in it! what a holy burning zeal for the salvation of souls! and what wisdom from above to conduct that zeal! what purity of knowledge to deal with those whose deep-rooted fondness for their ancient superstitions will make them watch, with a jealous eye, over every attempt to declare among them the truth, as it is in Jesus.

Nor should their patience, meekness, and childlike simplicity, be less eminent than their zeal. They must win by love, and conquer by holy perseverance; they must not be like some sort of missionaries, who suppose they are to be sent a pleasant voyage at the public expense: but they must be men "that count not their lives dear unto themselves, so that they may finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they have received of the Lord." Men that can be contented, out of pure love to Christ, to stand in jeopardy every hour. They must not only live like martyrs, but perhaps die like martyrs; we know not but the ancient proverb of the primitive Christians is again to be revived, the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church; they must be as dead to themselves as if they had no being; they must be completely crucified with Christ; in short, ere they embark upon the work, they must learn to

leave themselves behind them; with holy triumph they must be taught to say, Farewell, my dear native land, farewell to all the ease and happiness, and earthly indulgencies I have enjoyed therein; welcome affliction, necessities, distresses of every kind; labours, watchings, fastings, I now dread no more. Welcome a life now to be spent in journeying often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils by the sea: yea, welcome weariness and painfulness, hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness; yea, welcome death itself, whenever the blessed Lord himself, who died for me, demands that costly sacrifice at my hands. These are the men that shall be made more than conquerors over all the difficulties that human prudence, or unbelief, would present before us, to impede the way.

Human wisdom, we well know, would soon puzzle herself in the undertaking; while her little taper is brought to find the way through the darkness of the night, she only appears to add blackness and obscurity to all things beyond the little region her rays can reach; but, when the sun shines forth, he spreads his light upon the most distant objects, and every path is plain before us.

Some may have apprehensions that little can be done, because miracles are wanting, and the gift of tongues is withdrawn. Doubtless, Peter had a notable proof at hand of the doctrine he preached, while the lame man was leaping in the temple, who had been healed by the name of the Lord Jesus but just before. But miracles never cease, while souls are converted to God; nor will tongues be ever wanting, while the wonderful change wrought by the grace of God so loudly bespeaks the praises of his wonder-working power; let heathens see what grace can do on a real convert; and we need not any further be discouraged for want of miracles and tongues. And that spirit of unanimity and zeal which has hitherto attended the work is a happy sign that good shall be done; while the torrent runs with such rapidity, for the accomplishment of so good a design, I would not for

the world but appear on the Lord's side, on this occasion. "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord; curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord; to the help of the Lord against the mighty." No, my brethren, the providence of God commands that we exert ourselves for his glory. Difficulties there doubtless are; and an abundance of prayer, prudence, and holy zeal, will be necessary to conduct the work; but God can provide all that is necessary to carry on his own work, in his own way; and we have nothing to do but to follow as he condescends to lead. Thanks be to God for the unanimity, and good will, that have hitherto subsisted among us; and may we still be found steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we are assured that our labours shall not be in vain in the Lord!

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VANITY REPROVED.

TAULERE was a popular preacher belonging to the church of Rome, in the thirteenth century. He had just delivered a sermon on the best means of attaining the height of spiritual perfection, which was highly applauded. A poor, but holy layman, came to him soon after, and by a faithful address, made him sensible how much he fell short of the doctrine which he had inculcated; and concluded by telling him that he was little better than a Pharisee. Up to that word, Taulere heard the layman with patience; but it then failed him, and he began to justify himself with some warmth; but his inflexible reprover would not allow him to

proceed. "I call him a Pharisee," he said, "who, being full of himself, or too sensible of the esteem of men, seeks in his actions, however otherwise good and holy, his own glory, and not the glory of God. Consider, if you are not of this number. With what dispositions did you begin your studies? With what self-complacence do you contemplate your progress in them? What satisfaction have you in thinking of your dignity of doctor? Of the gifts with which heaven has favoured you? Instead of referring them to the glory of God, who should have all your love, and all your trust, you regard yourself too much; and thus, with all your knowledge, you are really ignorant; and, with all your labours, sermons, and writings, you do little good. Your doctrine is heavenly; the word of God is often on your lips; but, in consequence of your want of humility, you yourself do not relish the truths which you teach, and they produce little effect on your hearers. The pure in heart, who seek God alone, are shocked by your sermons, which contain many good things, but abound too much with yourself." Here the layman paused. For some time Taulere was silent: he was confounded with the clear view which, for the first time, he had of his vanity and defects;—but it was the moment of grace. "I acknowledge," he said to his instructor, "the truth of all you say. The Holy Spirit speaks by you to me. You read into my heart; God alone can enable you to do it: I was a stranger to my heart; complete what you have so well begun; you are my guide, my teacher, my master."—*Appendix to Butler's Life of Fenelon.*

## SERMON L.

### RECOGNITION IN HEAVEN.

BY THE REV. R. W. HAMILTON.

—◆—  
“*Then shall I know even as also I am known.*”—1 Cor. xiii. 12.

THAT the soul of every man who has hitherto died is living still—that the souls of every generation, including hundreds of millions, still exist—is a fact which we, perhaps without any examination, readily allow. We cannot but acknowledge—at least, when particularly pressed—that this being which is given to us shall be perpetually carried out, shall be eternally prolonged, a dawn without an eve, a race without a goal. We must further confess, that, whatever was the impression produced upon these spirits during their sojourn upon earth, never were they so conscious of what was present, so mindful of what was past, as in their actual state now. Nor shall we refuse to concede that their moral identity is unchanged, that they are the creatures of the same accountability as before, and that their present condition is linked together with their former history, as necessarily as indissolubly.

We come, then, to this dread conclusion: that every man who ever thought is still thinking; that every sensibility that ever felt still feels; that every consciousness revives itself; that every memory recalls itself; that every individual who has departed this life has entered into eternity, and is still distinctly and vividly alive to all the scenes of that mortal period which is past, and of that immortal economy which has succeeded and superseded it.

But to be able to take hold of this

truth, to receive an appropriate and a worthy impression of this fact, is far more difficult than its bare attestation. They who have quitted this earthly scene have scarcely left a trace of themselves behind: the arrow has flown, and the air has quickly closed upon the passage; the leaf has fallen, and is mixed with the earth around the parent tree; the raindrop has sunk into the ocean, and is lost in its depths. Our general and lesser conceptions touching the dead is, that they are no more, that they are extinct, that they have perished: but, surely as ourselves now live, exercising our faculties and entertaining our emotions, these spirits, no more within our range, with a mental activity to us unknown, now muse, now revolve, now look backward, now look forward, only more intensely, because their intellectual essence is undiverted, is unincumbered, and nothing can occur to dog its operations, or to fix it in forgetfulness or indifference.

Surely there is something very solemn, quite overpowering, in this anticipation of my future being; “*Then shall I know even as also I am known;*” that there will be a clearness and certainty around me, no prejudice, no distorting medium, no unsettling estimate, no tremulous light; and that this same clearness and certainty will not only shine around me, but shine through me, so that as little possible as it is for me to mistake any thing will it be for others to mistake

me; I can no longer wear a mask; I can no longer practise an imposition; I intuitively know, and as intuitively am known. What will be the soliloquies of a separate spirit in an eternal sphere? May such soliloquies be conceived? "In a far distant world I emerged to existence, I awoke to thought. My transition through that mysterious state of existence was as rapid as it was momentous. The change that I had foreknown by the name of death at last fell upon me: I was carried to this far-off scene. The stars have fallen from heaven, the sun is darkness, time is no longer; but I am what I was—I was what I am. I have the same instrumentality of reflection; I have the same capacity of feeling. Strange and awful as the surrounding phenomena, I am my own self." Then, brethren, we shall have reached the result, then we shall have grasped the conclusion: the fever of the world will have ceased, all its present delusions will have fled: we shall "know even as also we are known."

It is a relief, in considering that great interminable monument of our future being, in pondering that universal perception which we shall take of others, and others shall take of us, to institute such an inquiry as this: *Will Christian friends then meet—will they recognize each other?* There are many of us occupying places here who have not only a thought of the present and the future; we cannot withstand a thought of the past. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain: here have communed with us, in earlier or in later passages of our being, those whom we have known, and those whom we have loved. May I be permitted to say, that, in casting my eye over the present assembly, I am only struck with vacancy, bereavement, and loss; scarcely a familiar face do I see; and I know not whither to turn to find some friend of my infancy and my youth. But is there an absolute privation? Are those spirits of life, and of power, and of tenderness, quenched? We must think of heaven as an existing reality. We speak of it as if forgetting that it is only future to us. It is that which we

should bring near to ourselves; for our brethren and our kinsmen, sainted and glorified in heaven, have their present beatitudes, their present splendours, their present songs. Let us think of them, therefore, as only separated from us by a veil, and as absolutely and truly thinking and feeling as any of ourselves. But that veil will soon be torn aside; we shall soon ourselves have entered that region of spirits. Will there be those who shall be ready to welcome us? Shall there be those whom we ourselves can remember? That is not a barren speculation: it is that which surely has engaged every thinking mind and every susceptible heart. Let us attempt for a few moments to present the evidence on which we rest the credibility of the fact, that we shall know when we meet each other in the inheritance of light.

I am not opposed or insensible to evidence of rather an equivocal kind—evidence of unassisted reason and of undeciphered imagery. For when we are told that there is a demonstration of the eternal power and Godhead in the things that are seen, do we resist that demonstration? Or when we are informed that in the very instincts and in the very yearnings of the human bosom, there is a pledge of immortality, do we tread that pledge scornfully into the dust? And let reason be however uninformed, and let nature be however uninterpreted, the barbarian and the savage have loved the tale of the blue mountains and of the shadows behind them, where their ancestral shadows are awaiting their own arrival. And is not this the very voice of the human intellect, and the very confirmation brought in aid of the doctrine by the human heart? And it is not only those who are rude, those who are the uncivilized children of the forest and of the wild, who have thought and surmised this, but those of more polished education, and more refined culture: "O, renowned day," exclaimed the Roman orator, "when I shall have reached the divine assemblage of those minds with which I have congenial predilections, and shall escape this untoward and uncongenial throng!" "We but depart,"

said the lyrist of the same nation, "to meet our Æneas, and our Tully, and our Ancus." We are shadows as well as dust.

But there are arguments which we think more conclusive than those—which are more scattered, and which lie upon the very surface of things; arguments which we seize before we enter that branch of evidence which is more direct, positive, and overwhelming.

We observe, that *the contrary conclusion implies a destruction which is quite opposite to the dealings of God with our nature.* If I do not know in heaven those whom I have known here, there must have taken place an imperfection in my mind; there must be some breach of the judgment; there must be some abridgment of my memory; there must be some failure in my mental constitution. Now, we cannot suppose that that has taken place without an immediate agency on the part of God; and thus we must suppose that God blots out some of the exercises of the mind and of the recollection. But this seems quite opposite to his ordinary dealings with us; there is no such law as destruction in his universe; there may appear to be decay, but that which is decayed is always reproduced in its own or in some foreign form: and therefore, unless there was the strongest proof that we should not know each other, we should argue that it was contrary to all that we might infer concerning the divine conduct, and proceeds upon the idea of mutilating and injuring the human mind, making it something inferior and unequal to what we see it now is.

But then the converse can scarcely be doubted—that, in the region of lost spirits, those who have been companions in guilt and crime shall recognise each other, and that the scorn, and the taunt, and the defiance, shall greatly aggravate the torments of hell: so that we may easily suppose that they shall say, "Art thou become like one of us?" And if the lost spirit dreaded the thought of his five brethren being plunged into the same fiery deep, did it not involve the necessary consequence that, when so plunged,

it would be within his knowledge, within the range of his intellectual sense?

Now, heaven, we generally suppose—and suppose upon scriptural evidence—is the consummation of our present happiness, differing in degree, but not in nature. And what makes us happier upon earth than mutual acquaintance? "I have no greater joy," said the beloved disciple, "than to hear that my children walk in truth:" and was that joy entirely torn from his spirit, and was there no comparable gem bound in his crown when he passed from this world of distraction and discord, to that element and that region where, like himself, all was serenity and love? Therefore if we have pleasure in such knowledge and recognition now, it is not a forced or a violent inference that that pleasure will be heightened and confirmed where all is happiness, because we believe all is recognition and friendship?

Besides, it is impossible to think that all will be without a history and without a name; some, we know, will be pre-eminent, will be distinguished; we shall sit down with Abraham, and with Isaac, and with Jacob, in the kingdom of God. And will all other spirits flit before us unstoried and nameless, so that we can recollect nothing in their history and identify no association in our thoughts? Were we to adopt only this more general evidence, we should be almost obliged to adopt the conclusion that spirits meet and recognise each other in bliss, because the contrary supposition implies an imperfection of absolute enjoyment, a mutilation by the Author of the human mind of the mind itself; because the contrary supposition, that the sorrows of the lost aggravate their own misery by such knowledge, scarcely ever has been disputed; and because also likewise future happiness is but the carrying on the enlargement and perpetuity of present happiness; and because some will bear with them a name and interest, and a thousand recollections and sacred associations;—so we can easily imagine that the happiness of heaven will be augmented by its not being confined to a few, but being true of all.

But let Scripture decide; for in all such cases we must have a just and humbling sense of our weakness, the limitation of our knowledge, the very little that we can seize, and define, and make our own. When David thought of his dying child, he agonized in fasting and in prayer: when that child was taken away he summoned resolution; he found encouragement: and this was the language of his song: "Now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." That his head should recline on the same clod? or that his body should be devoured by the same reptile? or that he should be lodged in the same grave with him? We think far more is meant; here is an intimation of immortality, and of the commingings of two spirits in that immortality. And the same remark may be made (however common the phrase) when the pious are said to die and to be "buried with their fathers." It is chilling and repulsive to think that the cemetery only is referred to, and that there is no mingling of the departed except in the dust of the sepulchre.

There are other phrases (for we shall be ready to go from a dispensation where there was much obscurity, to another which has brought light and incorruption to light)—there are many phrases in the latter portion of the Christian Scriptures, which we think, are not only allusive, but which are absolutely decisive. "Knowing," said the apostle of the Gentiles—"Knowing that he who raised up the Lord Jesus Christ, shall also raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you." And again, he adjures those to whom he writes, "by our gathering together unto Jesus Christ." Analyze each statement, reduce it to what shape, try it by what rule you please, there seems to be a banishment of all point and of all spirit, unless you suppose that they will know each other when raised up and presented together, and gathered together, unto the Lord Jesus Christ.

To prove how disinterested was the spirit and purpose of the first Christian teachers, they always rested their labours

upon a reward: they did not deny that they contemplated a reward, and a reward full and comprehensive; but it was a reward not of this world, not of its withering palms, or its uncertain riches: it was a reward which consisted in the conversion, in the salvation, and in the glory of those spirits whom they had instrumentally rescued and saved. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and our joy." "That I may rejoice in the day of the Lord that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." "Look to yourselves, that ye receive a full reward." "That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." Now all this, surely, is confirmation strong, the confirmation of Holy Writ, that the apostles anticipated a reward, and that that reward cannot, for a moment, be separated from the recognition of those who were the fruits of their ministry, and the seals of their zeal.

But when it is necessary to insinuate kindly and soothing solace more distinctly and more impressively into the mind, the veil is raised, the eternal world is developed. "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we be ever with the Lord."

Now, granting that the doctrine is rather assumed in Scripture than stated and illustrated, yet as all was truly implied, what testimony can be more distinct, what evidence more perfect, than that which we have now cited in your

ears? When standing near the grave of Bethany, our Lord says, "Believest thou this?" and when, more directly, "Thy brother shall rise again;" was it that that brother was to be absorbed and lost in the myriads and the millions of spirits; so that the sisters who had lately laid him in the grave should see him and know him no more? But what has appeared to me a passage more completely pertinent than any other is, that in which the inspired apostle addresses Philemon. Onesimus had wronged him, but, by a providential course, the blind had been led by a way which he knew not, and directed by the apostolical preaching, he had become "a brother beloved in the Lord." How was the wrong to be repaired, and how was the injury to be overlooked? "For perhaps," said the correspondent—"perhaps he therefore departed for a season, *that thou shouldst receive him for ever:*" which would be altogether insignificant and unsuited, unless there was in the heavenly world such a recognition as that for which we contend, where a Philemon should see his converted slave who had departed from him for a season that he might (so had Providence overruled, and grace directed it) receive him for ever.

And very frequently there are very plain mementos made in the sacred writings concerning those who have gone before us: and those mementos surely are that we should carry our recollections, not to the tomb, but that we should project our thoughts and our memories into the world where all is light and all is known. "Be ye followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." In their inheritance of those promises were they not to be known, or not to be remembered, by us who attain to the same inheritance? "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation."

It is necessary, to complete this soothing consolation, to think of this world which they inherit, and to anticipate our union with them. "Here," said the apostle to those who were about to en-

dure all the perils and the vicissitudes of Jerusalem's siege, all the horrors and all the afflictions which were coming upon the devoted city—"Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." In the mean time charity was to "cover the multitude of sins;" they were to "let brotherly love continue." How unnatural to think that this was all pent up within the present earth, and that in heaven those amiable feelings should enjoy no scope, and enjoy no expatiation!

The process of judgment seems to include this recognition of each other. A cup of cold water given to a disciple in the name of Jesus shall not be without its reward. The Saviour, specifying those who are before him shall say, "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me." Now, this is reflected in the persons of those who are in the crowd: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Then, when we go further, and consider the Christian doctrine upon the destruction and the overthrow of death, the triumph which has taken place over that monster, we find that the sacred writings abound in hints of illation and of evidence. "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Now, this implies that all that death has done of evil and of pain shall be compensated, that the victory shall be stripped from him, that the sting shall be taken from him, and that, in fact, the chasm shall be filled up. But what has been a more bitter consequence of death than bereavement—the separation from relations, and the loss of friends? How, if that is never repaired, can it be said that death has no sting, that the grave has no victory? How is it that you are enabled to shout that cry over the coffin, and over the hearse, and over the mauso-

leum, but that the dead shall live—but that they shall arise from the dust—but that you shall know them when reorganized and reanimated—when you shall meet them, spirits in glory and in bliss? The very triumph, therefore, which is to be achieved evolves, according to your preacher's apprehension, that that which is the principal bitter and evil in death shall be made up to us. And how can it be made up but by our reunion with those from whom we are now severed?

But think of the happiness of the heavenly world. Will all remembrance of that world which we have left be suspended? Shall we not think of the means of our conversion—what we have done for others—what others have done for us? Hear the new language: "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." Is not this a rush of the past upon the soul? Is not this like living again? And how could we conceive of the zest and the vividness of the transport but by the contrast which earth with all its vicissitudes, and sin with all its sorrow, will supply?

We therefore think that it is not merely an intimation, that it is absolutely a discovery, that it is a clear doctrine of Scripture, that we shall know each other if, through infinite grace, we are "saved even as they."

We are not at all, however, unconscious that objections may be raised against this doctrine. It may be said to be a very restrictive one. Shall we not range at all? Shall we not know all that family of heaven, formed as it is from the infinite family of earth? Let us remember that eternity is before us, and that the probability is, that we, in the compass of that eternity, may know and enjoy them all. But from what centre shall we at the earliest period proceed? How shall we commence that joy that shall be perpetuated and heightened through the ages of eternity? Is it restrictive and is it narrow to suppose that those with whom we have taken sweet counsel will be those whom we first shall address, or will be the first to accost us? And though it shall be only

the commencement of that high and sublime familiarity, yet that familiarity will require commencement. And then, perhaps, as we go on, circle after circle, knowledge added to knowledge, endearment heaped upon endearment, as by a sort of intuition the disciples knew a Moses and an Elijah, so may we know even as also we are known.

It may, perhaps, be further contended, that we shall be too much engaged in our own happiness to heed the enlargement of that happiness in the knowledge of others. But let us pause for a moment, and demand what knowledge is there that we require for this happiness. Is it the knowledge of esteem, and of love, and of friendship? And there is no happiness in religion which is contracted and selfish. So that we may look around on all that vast domain, and all that blood-bought multitude, and we may even inquire their former condition, as well as gaze upon their present immortality; and it will not be distracting to our own happiness, to say, "Who are these, and whence come they?" And, therefore, our happiness not being narrow and circumscribed, we are happy in loving others, in loving them even as they love us. And thus shall it be perfected in us: we shall dwell in God, and God in us.

But shall we not, (and we honour the sensitiveness of the objection,) shall we not be so enrapt in the vision of the Lamb—so enamoured of the glory of the beauty of Him who is in the midst of the throne, that there can be no vacancy in our eye for the creature, and not one nook in the heart in which a creature shall be enshrined? There is something honourable but mistaken in the objection: because, do we not *here* honour the Saviour? Said Paul, "They glorify God in me:" and there were those on earth of whom he spake, as being the glory of Christ; Christ was therefore magnified in them. And when there are harpers harping with their harps, and multitudes uniting in vocal chorus, will not the union of those sounds, and the swell of those acclamations, induce each other to love the Saviour as they are acquainted

with each, entering into each other's sympathies and each other's joy?

But, it will be said, if we can remember the good, must we not remember the evil? If we recognise our beloved friends, must we not deplore the absence of those, who, whatever was their guilt, were dear to our bosoms, and were twined around our hearts? My brethren, the love which we owe to our unconverted acquaintance and friends, it is not our purpose to condemn. Love them, and show that you have much sorrow in your hearts for your brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh: but remember, that whatever you deplore, on the supposition that they are now lost, or in any way put yourselves in an antagonist attitude to the divine will and the divine arrangement, there is a feeling which we denominate an amiable feeling, but which is really unamiable, if it is in contravention of what the divine law has demanded and denounced. But you are perfect in heaven; that which is in part is done away, that which is perfect is come. You cannot conceive of that which is perfect in heaven, without the most entire absolute acquiescence in what God has arranged, or what God has suffered. Then, though this feeling will not arise and not distress, we can most easily presage, that there it is unknown, exactly because the will of God is done in heaven: and whenever we ask, that that will may be done now, it is that it may be "done on earth as it is in heaven." We know not that awful exultation which glorified spirits raise over the downfall of their spiritual adversaries; but the smoke of their torment may arise, and yet they shall cry "Hallelujah! the judgment of the enemies of God is come."

But is not this an unworthy consideration, that we might live indifferently; and, amidst those sweet glimpses of other bright visions of heaven, which come on our spirits, might we not, at least, forget and even reject those whom we loved? My brethren, we want nothing that reverses the nature that God gave us: we can find in religion nothing irrational, nothing unnatural: every thing in religion is nothing but the refinement of

what we are, the taking from us that which is gross and alloying. Now that which makes us capable of loving must always be honourable to us: and what is there more pleasingly associated with the thought of home, than that there shall be some welcome tone falling on our ears, that there shall be some familiar feature reaching your eye—that there shall be something assuring and confidential in the manner of a few spirits grouped around us, who know us, who are unveiled to us, and by whom we are as instantly recognised as we recognise them: and these leading us forward to the very footstool of the throne, taking the place of the very "ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation." So that, angels having borne our spirits to the heavenly threshold, there shall be some of our best friends, our kindred there, ready to meet us, and there to dwell with them for ever. It is not, O Saviour, to forget thee that we think of them whom thou hast loved, and whom we still love to remember.

There is an improvement to be made of this subject, (which, I trust, will not be regarded as curious speculation, but as scriptural truth,) and it is this. Of course there are those who, by their incorrigible and impenitent conduct, prove that they have no desire to meet their sires in the realms of peace: they love not the goodness here, and they desire not an incorruption with the good for ever. All that we can understand: and yet it may be that the disobedient child has sometimes hugged the thought to himself, that his happiness was necessary to the happiness of his parents—of a father who has expostulated, a mother who has wept; and this has been the very thought and purpose of their heart: "They cannot be happy without me: may I not therefore be saved, even if it be by fire!" No: and let me particularly enter a caveat against a sentiment like this, and protest against that which is so unnatural, and which is so unfounded. Little care you, evidently, for parents' sympathy and commiseration, who only think that that commiseration and that sympathy can stand you in some stead. There is an insensi-

bility, there is an ungraciousness, there is that which is perfectly fiendish in the suggestion itself. But your parents will not then have all that now belongs to them, for they will be as the angels of God; they will not know what it is to weep; they will be perfect in their joy as well as complete in their purity. And (if it be then necessary and so ordered) think not that your parents, for a moment, would forbid the execution of the sentence, or the stroke of the judge. You will not be able to cover their breast with a single shade of disquietude—not be able, for a single moment, to grieve or wound their heart. You have done your last, you have done your worst, but parental kindness and sensibility will never stand between you and the wrath of the Almighty.

This is a subject that should excite us to usefulness. He who teaches in the Sabbath-schools, and he who goes about in the lanes and in the purlieus of the city, what has encouraged him when most disheartened, and fortified him when most relaxed? That there is some one now his persecutor who shall be his eternal joy; that there is one who is throwing all his ridicule upon him who shall rejoice with him in the mansions of their common Father's house. O let the teacher of the child thus bear it in mind. There is a child most hopeless and apparently most irreclaimable; a few more years the child is lost to the teacher, the teacher to the child; and now the teacher, unnoticed and unheard of, enters on his reward. What spirit comes and greets him now? That vacant face, (but O, you have made it radiant,) that idle hand, (but O! you have taught it to strike the golden harp,) that bitter voice, (but O! you have made it musical with the anthems of heaven,)—live, and that very one over whom you despaired, comes to bless you, to invite you, to repay you!

And is not this the very thought involving the fact of recognition: "If any of you do err from the truth, and one of you convert him, let him know that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul alive, and shall hide the multitude of sins?" Know it as an

impalpable abstraction? Know it as a possible fact? Know it as a fact that never can be denied? You take away the very zeal of piety by such criticisms as these. "Let him know that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul alive, and shall hide the multitude of sins"—knowing that he who soweth and he who reapeth shall rejoice together.

But this is a subject which may teach us to condole with each other, and a circumstance is involved in this subject which makes us think more soberly of the future than of the present or of the past. There are some who are quite young in this assembly, and they think they are surrounded with a world of friends. There are others who have arrived at middle age, and at absolute age. Let me ask, then, if you are prepared for heaven? Is not this that which quickens the very thought of that heaven, that you go to find more friends than you leave behind? This is the highest excellence, this is concentrated goodness, and though we reflect not on the present, and, least of all, despair of the future, believing that the very saints of the Most High shall populate our earth—yet why are our feelings so lacerated, and our affections so thwarted? What is heaven but the regaining of so much as we have lost, and much more than we can ever hope to find?

Therefore, my brethren, though we give all glory to God and to the Lamb, though we think of that uncreated radiance which spreads itself over the everlasting hills, though we think of the angels with their harps, yet let us not forget, in the enumeration of all that belongs to heaven, in the enumeration of all those glories, and of all those felicities, that *there* dwell those who once dwelt below, that *there* walk those with whom we once walked, that *there* sing those with whom we once sung. But as we sung with them the sigh interfered, and the tear frequently fell upon the cheek; but *then* we shall sing together, and the song shall never fade, shall never drop, and shall never die away. "Wherefore comfort ye one another with these words." Amen.

## SERMON LI.

THE MORAL CONDITION OF THE WORLD A SOURCE OF CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY.

BY THE REV. JOHN BOWERS.

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*“And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.”—Ezek. ix. 4.*

EZEKIEL, one of the greatest of the Jewish prophets, arose at a dark and calamitous period in the history of that nation. Their king, their princes, their chief noblemen, had been carried captive by Nebuchadnezzar into Babylon. Ezekiel, with many of his countrymen, was placed on the banks of the Chebar, a river of Mesopotamia. It was here, far from Zion, the city of their solemnities, amidst the sad remembrance of departed joys, the gloom of captivity, the sighing of the prisoners, and the scorn and derision of the heathen population, that the prophet was favoured with the divine revelations that are contained in this book. His countrymen, who were still left in Judea, notwithstanding the divine judgments, remained awfully impenitent;—Jerusalem was still the theatre of the most audacious crimes; the temple itself was still defiled by the most flagrant abominations. The prophet Jeremiah, who denounced the vengeance of God against their accumulated transgressions, was insulted, persecuted, and his message rejected. False prophets abounded amongst them, who predicted the speedy downfall of Nebuchadnezzar's dominion, and the return, after the brief interval of two years, of their captive king and countrymen. The exiles on the river Chebar, too, unsubdued by the calamities they had suffered, refused to acknowledge the justice of the divine chastisements; they,

too, hearkened to the voice of false prophets, and remained in their rebellion and idolatry. Ezekiel, with inspired confidence and fortitude, inveighs against their aggravated hypocrisy and wickedness, and boldly exhorts them to repentance: he describes the still greater desolations that were yet impending over Jerusalem; and, beholding their universal apostacy, predicts the total destruction of their city and temple; and yet, to sustain their desponding hopes amid all their sufferings, he proclaims, on their repentance, the promise of the divine forgiveness; and not only comforts them by the assurance of their approaching deliverance, under their deliverer Cyrus, but directs their attention to the still more glorious redemption under the peaceful sovereignty of the Messiah; and though fallen were their altars, and desolate their sanctuaries, and dishonoured in chains of captivity their princes, yet he describes what, in prophetic vision, he had been permitted to behold, the structure of a new temple, and the erection of a new polity, which was not only literally accomplished on the return to their own land, but in the establishment of the universal church, a temple which shall be filled with the glory of the Lord, and within whose hallowed courts the regenerated nations of the whole earth shall assemble to worship. These mighty predictions he clothed in extraordinary

and sublime language, in allegorical representations, and images of obscure, yet majestic sublimity.

Our text occurs in the midst of one of those mysterious visions by which the whole book is so remarkably distinguished. The glory of the Lord appeared to the prophet on the plains of Chebar. There is seen the chariot-throne of God, magnificent and terrible beyond the imagination of uninspired man. All that creation could contribute united to invest it with unequalled pomp and majesty. It was surrounded by four most wonderful and inexplicable animated forms; it was borne by wheels, wheels within wheels, instinct with a living spirit. The throne, which stood above the cherubim and seraphim, was refulgent as fire; its canopy was of crystal, ineffably resplendent. His feet were wrapped in the brightness of flames; lightnings flashed from his pathway; and around his head there flowed, in mingled splendour, the resplendent colours of the rainbow. He went, and his speed was as the whirlwind, and the rushing sweep of the cherubim's wings was as the noise of great waters; he spake, and his voice was as loud thunder.

The Divine Being, who, under these circumstances of such glorious, yet awful magnificence, and clothed in such awful majesty, had appeared to his servant, to appoint him to the office he had selected him to fill, again addresses him: "Then I beheld, and lo! a likeness, as the appearance of fire; from the appearance of his loins, even downward, fire: and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber. And he put forth the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the Spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy. And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, according to the vision that I saw in the plain. Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north." He was transported to the holy city, and to

the Lord's house, that he might witness the abominations there done by this apostate people. At the northern gate of the temple he was shown "the image of Jealousy"—the image of some idol god, or idolatry itself personified, and called "the image of Jealousy," from the daring provocation which it offered to the majesty of Jehovah. At the door of another of its sacred courts he was shown seventy of the elders of the people, the members of their celebrated council, the sanhedrim; seventy of the ancient of the house of Israel, with each a censer in his hand, worshipping every form of creeping thing and abominable beasts; and all the idols of the house of Israel portrayed upon the wall round about. Conducted to another of its sacred gates, still more revolting scenes met his view. There he was shown women weeping for Tammuz, (the Adonis of the Greeks,) engaged within the sacred precincts of the temple in the impure and licentious worship of the heathen deity. The prophet had not yet beheld the whole of the dark picture: "Hast thou seen,"—exclaimed the voice of the Holy One—"hast thou seen this, O son of man? Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these." And he led him into the inner court of the Lord's house; and at the door of the temple, between the porch and the altar, the spot hallowed by the most sacred rights of the Jewish religion, he was shown twenty-five men with their faces towards the east, worshipping the sun towards the east. "Hast thou seen *this*?"—reiterated, in a tone of righteous indignation, the voice of God to his servant—"hast thou seen *this*, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah, that they commit the abominations which they commit here?—for they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger; and, lo! they put the branch to their nose. Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them." In immediate execution of the divine vengeance, the prophet next beholds six men, with each a slaughter

weapon in his hand,—(an emblem, as it is thought by some, of those invisible powers who are sometimes charged to execute judgment on guilty nations; or representing, as others say, the Chaldees, by whom the city was afterwards actually destroyed,)—six men, with each a slaughter weapon in his hand, and one clothed in purest raiment, with a writer's inkhorn by his side. "He" that sat on the chariot-throne of the divine glory "cried in mine ears," saith the prophet, "Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand." And they went in and stood beside the brazen altar, as though prepared to offer the fearful sacrifice which the justice of an insulted Deity required. But, ere the victims are brought forth, the Shekinah, the glorious symbol of the presence of the Lord, was seen to remove from the inner sanctuary between the wings of the cherubim, its chosen place of rest, to the threshold of the door, as though unwilling longer to dwell, as though preparing to forsake a house which had been so polluted by these abominations. The Lord then thus addresses him that had the inkhorn by his side: "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." No sooner was this accomplished than "to the others he said, in mine hearing, Go ye after him, through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity; slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary,"—which had been so horribly polluted by these abominable idolatries. The prophet, left alone among the dead, fell upon his face, and began to make intercession for his people: "Ah, Lord God! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem?" But God, with unrelenting, yet righteous vengeance, refuses any longer to suspend their punishment: "Then said he unto me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceed-

ing great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness: for they say, The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not. And as for me, also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; but I will recompense their way upon their head." And he whose office it was to affix the distinguishing mark on the mourners, reported the accomplishment of his functions, saying, "Lord, I have done as thou hast commanded me."

May we not, my Christian friends, adapt these words to the events of modern times, to the object of our present assembling, and to the condition of the world at large? The history of the Jewish church develops the great principles on which the divine government is conducted. Those principles, as the perfections of the Godhead, are invariable; his administration through all the revolutions of time is essentially the same; the past is a picture of the present and of the future, and exhibits to us the plan of the divine procedure toward the world at large. "The things which happened to them," saith the apostle, "were for examples, (were for types,) and are written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the world are come." The condition of the existing population of the earth presents abominations equalling in turpitude and aggravation, and far surpassing in number, those which were disclosed to the eye of the prophet; and the perfections of the divine nature, and the principles of the divine government, being the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, they must provoke, as certainly and as severely, the indignation and abhorrence of God; and they demand from his people, as reasonably and as urgently now as then, those acts of holy lamentation which marked the conduct of the few who mourned over the idolatries of Judah and Jerusalem.

Suffer me, then, in the *first* place, to offer for your contemplation, SOME OF THE MOST OBVIOUS MORAL EVILS WHICH THE CONDITION OF THE WORLD PRESENTS TO GENERAL OBSERVATION. In the *second* place, to dwell on THE CHARACTER ASCRIBED IN THE TEXT TO THE PEOPLE OF

GOD IN WITNESSING THESE ABOMINATIONS. In the *third* place, to consider THOSE EXPRESSIONS OF THE DIVINE APPROBATION BY WHICH THEIR CONDUCT IS DISTINGUISHED. Give me not only your attention, but, what I most earnestly need, your sincere and earnest prayers, that almighty God may attend the word of his grace with the manifestation and power of his Spirit.

Our office, in the *first* place, is an unwelcome one; it is TO SURVEY THOSE MORAL EVILS WHICH THE CONDITION OF THE WORLD MOST PROMINENTLY EXHIBITS TO THE EYE OF THE CHRISTIAN OBSERVER.

Could we have been borne by that majestic hand and that invisible Spirit, which lifted the prophet between the earth and the heaven, to show to him the idolatries of the polluted city; could we be thus transported to explore those regions of desolation, those dark places of the earth, those chambers of imagery, those valleys of the dead, which the surface of the whole earth presents to the pure eye of heaven; O, what an affecting and heartrending spectacle of multiform transgression and iniquity should we behold!

Let me mention, in the first place, *the idolatry of pagan nations*. Jehovah created the fair and beauteous structure in which we dwell a place of perfect loveliness. The immortal creatures whose residence it became bare his unsullied image, and reflected the beauties of their Maker. "Him first, him last, him midst," they worshipped, loved, and obeyed. The first transgression despoiled our nature of these exalted attributes; the knowledge with which it had been endowed was obliterated by the deepest ignorance, its purity effaced by total depravity, and the adoration and affection of the Creator degraded into an acknowledgment of gods many and lords many. It is melancholy to observe at what an early period in the history of the world idolatry arose, and to what an awful extent and with what rapidity its triumphs have spread. In nations of the greatest antiquity, in an age when civilization had diffused its meliorating influence, when philosophy and the arts flourished, then

idolatry flourished too; it was interwoven with their history, blended with their literature, advanced with the creations of their poetic genius, and sanctioned by the practice of their philosophers. Let Egypt, let Greece, let Rome tell, that "the world by wisdom knew not God." Amidst these its proudest victories idolatry exhibited the same distinguishing features which now mark its character. Their deities were perpetrators of crimes, and patrons of vice; their rites were sanguinary and polluted; and the tendency of their worship demoralizing and degrading. From age to age the delusion has been perpetuated; and, wherever man is found in the unmitigated darkness of his apostacy, we there behold him refusing to retain the knowledge of God in his mind, and changing the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

It is humiliating to dwell on the subject: the bare enumeration of the objects to which is addressed the worship due to the living God is mournful beyond description. Man has worshipped the sun, the moon, the stars, the elements; he has worshipped the spirits of the dead; he has populated the woods, the rivers, the mountains, the valleys, the gardens, with divinities; he has worshipped the brute, he has worshipped creeping things; fishes of the sea and fowls of the air have been the objects of his adoration; he has worshipped his own image, the work of his own hands, wood and stone, gold and silver; and, sinking to the lowest degree in moral degradation, he has worshipped devils, and not God. The character of his imaginary deities to this day is that of monstrous impiety, obscenity, and cruelty. The ceremonies of his idolatrous worship are those of impurity and blood; parents have imbrued their hands in the blood of their own offspring; the hands of the child have grasped the flaming torch to light the fire at the funeral sacrifice of his own mother; thousands by thousands of human victims have bled on their altars; extended plains have been crimsoned with the gore, or, like one vast sepulchre, whitened by the bones of

their countless victims. Their temples have been the scenes of the most revolting crimes, and the most diabolical spectacles.

To contemplate this as the condition of five or six hundred millions of the human race chills the blood, and rends the heart with horror. To see the most populous nations of the earth,—China, Japan, the Birman empire, the greater part of Tartary, Hindostan, the kingdoms of Africa, the isles of the sea,—thus enslaved by iron superstition, brutalized by the grossest ignorance, debased by vices which destroy the last traces of God's image from the human soul, transform the man into a brute or a fiend, and hurl him into the abyss of eternity in hopeless darkness and despair!—

“My God, I feel the mournful scene,  
My bowels yearn o'er dying men,  
And fain my pity would reclaim,  
And snatch the firebrands from the flame.”

If we contemplate *those portions of the earth which are under the delusion of Mohammedanism*, the spectacle is scarcely less mournful. To behold one hundred millions of immortal creatures, the unfettered dupes of an audacious and monstrous imposture, an imposture arrogating the name of religion, changing the truth of God into a lie, mingling its sacred facts with the most preposterous fables, and investing with the sanction of divine authority the dreams and reveries of an ambitious, cruel, and voluptuous tyrant; to see the monstrous fable upheld by entire nations, its murderous cimeters brandished by the tribes of Arabia, Persia, Turkey, Egypt; brandished, too, to support a system based in falsehood, propagated by violence and blood, withering the rights which meliorate the condition of our species, and the virtues which exalt and bless it; inspiring a savage disposition, dictating a barbarous despotism; leaving the corruptions of the heart unrestrained, nay, fastening them in iron rivets by the allurements of their sensual paradise; stimulating the propensities which level man with the brute: if these objects do not deserve the application of the expressive language of the text; if

these are not “abominations,” things hateful, things detestable, which kindle our abhorrence, and awaken our deepest horror, what is there in the range of the whole visible creation of which such language may be used?

To another spectacle I would direct your attention—the *impotence and unbelief of the Jewish people*. It is mournful to behold a magnificent fabric in desolation and ruin. Who can survey greatness fallen; who can see the branch of a noble family, once distinguished by every quality which could make it illustrious, reduced to abject poverty and distress, without regret! With unaffected sadness, then, must we contemplate the desolation of the people once beloved and honoured of God above all others on the face of the earth, the posterity of Abraham the friend of God, the heirs of his covenant, the benefactors of mankind, the repositories and guardians of the oracles of God, their land the valley of vision, their history an assemblage of miracles, their prophets divinely inspired, their temple the joy of the whole earth; its sacred courts hallowed by the visible symbol of a present God, and its whole worship invested with a superhuman splendour, and (surpassing all other distinctions) of whom Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. How glorious their exaltation! How deep and affecting their fall! They crucified the Lord of glory, they imbrued their hands in the blood of the Son of God; and wrath has come upon them to the uttermost. They have been the victims of the severest persecution and the most unparalleled miseries; their temple wasted, their city trampled down, their land cursed, their name reproached, their tribes scattered as vagabonds, their name a by-word and a hissing!

And not less deplorable is their *moral* condition. True it is, idolatry no longer exists among them; true it is, that those abominations which were shown to the prophet are no longer practised by them. They hold the unity of the Godhead, but they reject his word; they believe his prophets, but they reject the types which they profess to reverence, and which in the advent and mediation of Christ received

their full accomplishment. Stricken with a judicial blindness, they preserve the books which contain their own condemnation; and they still obstinately adhere to their former legal dispensation; they are still hardened against the gospel, and still blaspheme the Saviour of the world. Unbelief, the most stubborn and unyielding unbelief, inherited from century to century, still veils their understanding, and perpetuates their calamity. Pagan idolatry and the superstition of Mahomedanism have been vanquished by the power of the gospel; but the unbelief of the Jew spurns it with an invincible obstinacy. What an accumulation of guilt, presenting us with no relentings, with no mournful confessions of their abounding crimes, their bigotry, their avarice, their sensuality, their infidel denial of Him whom they have crucified! By an infatuated confidence in the burdens of their Talmud, and the reveries of their rabbins, they are still making the word of God of none effect by their traditions, and substitute for the religion of Jehovah the most abominable rites and ceremonies; while piety, the vital spirit, is extinct and dead. Dreary and desolate is the scene; the dead valley stretches to an extent which the eye but indistinctly traces; and everywhere is seen no symptom of returning animation; no shaking is heard among the bones; the silence of death is there; the bones are motionless, and still mingle with the dust. Brethren, let us pray for them: "How long, Lord, wilt thou be angry with them? Must thy jealousy burn for ever? Come, thou compassionate and long-suffering Spirit, in the midst of wrath remember mercy: come from the four winds of heaven, and breathe on these slain that they may live!"

We have yet to contemplate scenes of a deeply mournful character; not merely the abominations existing in those parts of the earth where the gospel is unknown, but also *those to be found among nations professing Christianity*. These divide themselves into the *Protestant states, those of the Roman Catholic, and the Greek church*.

In these last two divisions we see (differing, it may be, in some of the minor

features, but not in the great outline of its character)—we see antichrist sitting in the temple of God, Christianity robbed of its finest attributes, its simplicity rejected, its doctrines associated with the grossest errors, the most degrading superstitions, and the most unhallowed practices. What rank abomination is it, that under sanction of Christianity the Bible should be withheld from the people, (the word of God, which is the birth-right of every human being,) who are thus left to perish for lack of knowledge; that its divine and saving truths should be corrupted with the grossest falsehoods; that the purity of its sacred worship should be degraded with the admixture of idolatry; and that for pure and undefiled religion should be substituted a train of carnal ordinances, an assemblage of corruption, mummery, and imagery—for the meekness and love of the gospel an intolerant and bigoted spirit, which has lit the flames of persecution, wellnigh filled Europe with martyrs, and made its cities to resound with the cries of their blood! And even where the Christian church is reformed from these errors, what evils of appalling magnitude exist, in common, too, with those existing in the papal states! There we see skepticism producing the most fatal heresies—deism scoffing at the authority of divine revelation—infidelity trampling on every thing sacred—multitudes possessing only the form of godliness—multitudes possessing not even that—an insensibility to every religious object—a general profligacy of manners—vice in every form—the havoc of war—the wrongs and cruelties of slavery—the establishment of institutions adverse to the spirit of Christianity—corruption almost in every form and degree exhibited and widely disseminated throughout the several classes of the community. These are facts; and I have not exaggerated any of them. These are scenes over which, while tears can flow, the eye of Christian compassion should never cease to weep.

But before I dismiss this painful and distressing part of the subject, fidelity requires me to advert to some circumstances, in the state of *our own country*,

which demand from ourselves (bound as we are to its welfare, and bound as our dearest interests are in its destiny) a faithful recognition.

Previously to this, I would, for a moment, glance at those circumstances of encouragement, hope, and gratitude, which, notwithstanding our abounding ungodliness, exist amongst us. I would refer you to the preservation of our national blessings—the continuance of our religious privileges—the diffusion of useful knowledge—the unexampled circulation of the word of God—the extent of the blessings of education, (education, I trust, to a considerable degree, in the principles of Christianity)—the preaching of the word of God, Sabbath after Sabbath, in our cities, and towns, and villages—the large and increasing number of pious, devoted, and zealous ministers of the gospel—the vast and imposing machinery at work amongst us for the revival and extension of pure and undefiled religion. These, and many others which I might enumerate, are the rays of sunshine which relieve the deep and overspreading darkness of the picture; these are spots of verdure amidst the sterility of the desert, upon which the eye fixes with gladness and fervent hope.

In the catalogue of our abominations, I mention *the encouragement given to the grossest idolatry in the management of our East Indian possessions*. That idolatry should there be encouraged, yea, that agents should be employed (pilgrim-hunters, I believe they are called) to recruit the wasting ranks of pagan worshippers—that its most revolting services should be made a source of sordid gain—that for this purpose its temples should be supported from the public coffers—that licentiousness and bloodshed should be made a source of public revenue, (so that it has been asserted, on good authority, that in the course of a few years, from four temples only ONE MILLION of money was received by the East India Company)—and that these should be the acts of a Christian government, representing a Christian nation, is an iniquity so daring and outrageous that I know not in what terms to designate it.

And within the circle of our domestic policy I must notice (and I do it in sorrow, not in anger) *the general exclusion of God—the reluctance to acknowledge his providence—ay, the refusal to admit his name into some of the public documents of a professedly Christian state*. Our national sins, too, the sins of the community, are so fearful that we cannot contemplate them without the deepest horror and anguish. I must first mention *infidelity—bold, reckless, desolating infidelity—diffusing its poisonous influence through all ranks of society*. What practical infidelity, what practical ungodliness, what a rejection of the gospel of Christ, what an exclusion of religion from the ordinary affairs of life, what a neglect of its public ordinances! How many are there who, though they still retain the forms of Christianity, and fly at the imputation of infidelity, do either secretly and in their hearts believe that the Bible is false, or think it of no importance whether it is true or not. The awful desecration of the Lord's-day by all classes of society; intemperance—open, shameless, disgusting intemperance; the sin of profane swearing—the audacious oaths, the name of God blasphemed, death and damnation sported with, even in common conversation; the sensuality and lewdness which outrage public decency! Our commercial sins, too; the impiety and licentiousness which to an awful extent pollute and disgrace the public press of the country; the number of the ungodly, constituting, not the exception, but the great mass and multitude of the people! The flagrant character of our sins, the boldness and impudence which characterize them, notwithstanding the advantages in the midst of which they are committed—it is not in the absence of light, it is not in the destitution of means to restrain from evil or to excite to good; but in the existence of all these to an unparalleled extent—yea, in contempt of all these, in defiance of all these, our national sins have acquired their present enormous character.

Perhaps I may, just for a moment, notice some of those evils which, even in the imaginary and professedly religious

world demand our mournful acknowledgment. Yes, we perhaps have congratulated ourselves on escaping the more flagrant abominations of our countrymen; but, even among *the professors of religion*, how low is the state of personal religion! how defective the standard of Christian practice!—what small service done for Christ (small in comparison with our obligations and with our means)!—what worldliness, what vacillation, what coldness, what formality, what sectarian animosity, what strifes and dissensions, what extravagance and ostentation! These, brethren, are surely grievous in the eyes of God, who guards the purity of his church with peculiar jealousy, and will be sanctified by them who draw nigh to him; these must appear peculiarly odious in his eyes, and may well make us tremble, if not for our country and for the church, at least for ourselves; for, though God deals with nations and communities in their social character, yet he deals with individuals separately. “O, our God! what shall we say to these things? We blush, and are ashamed to lift our faces to heaven. To us belong shame and confusion of face—to our kings, to our princes, to our fathers; for we have sinned against thee: but still, to thee, O Lord God, belong mercies and forgiveness.”

Let me, in the *second* place, contemplate THE CHARACTER ASCRIBED TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD IN WITNESSING THESE ABOMINATIONS. They are described as those who *sigh* and who *cry* over them.

The first of these expressive terms, I apprehend, is intended to describe *their silent grief*, their tears in secret, the meltings of their compassion over the sins and miseries of their fellow creatures. How different is this from the apathy of the ungodly, who *partake and rejoice* in iniquity! It is to be distinguished from the snarl of the cynic, and from the sarcasm of the mere satirist, and has more feeling and sincerity in it. It is to be distinguished from the affectation of sorrow, a sentimental and dramatic sort of mockery and grief; it is *godly* sorrow—it is *holy* grief—it is *honest* sympathy, *deep, heartfelt* commiseration—the tears

of mingled affection and pity—the sighing of a wounded heart—the groaning of a burdened and a broken spirit.

They not only *sigh*, but *cry*. This is intended to denote, not merely their intense and unceasing supplications to God, but also their earnest and imploring entreaties addressed to men. Both of these, I apprehend, are intended in these phrases: they *cry to God* in the voice of prayer and intercession; they *cry to men* in the voice of expostulation, and warning, and reproof. They *cry* by their own condemnation of sin—by their own resistance to its progress—by their individual and combined efforts to exterminate, in every part of the earth, its accursed influence. They *cry* as wisdom lifts up her voice in the public places of the city—as Jonah in the streets of Nineveh—and as the prophets were called to cry aloud, and not to spare, to lift up their voice like a trumpet, to show the people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins.

This is not an occasional, not an incidental attribute in the character of God's people; it is attached to that character at every period of time. At a very early age in the history of the world, when all flesh had corrupted its way before God, Noah, a preacher of righteousness, cried out against the prevailing ungodliness of his time. Lot, amidst the impurity of Sodom, vexed his righteous soul from day to day. Moses, oppressed with anguish at the idolatries of the faithless people, cried, with holy importunity, “Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin;—and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book.” Isaiah, in a tone of most pathetic melody, deplored the condition of his countrymen: “Look away from me; I will weep bitterly; labour not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people.” David, overwhelmed with the spectacle of surrounding impiety, cries out, “Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.” Jeremiah, in a similar strain, exclaims, “O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my peo-

ple!" Paul, in tones of the deepest sympathy, exclaims, "I say the truth in Christ; I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." And do examples here fail me! No; I rise from man to God. Jesus, the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, most tenderly, most plaintively exemplified this divine affection. When did he survey the abominations of the world, and not melt into pity over them? Behold him in his approach to Jerusalem: "When he saw the city, *he wept over it.*" Behold him stretched on the accursed tree, atoning with his blood for the crimes we have committed, and mingling, with his departing breath, the prayer, "Father, *forgive them*, for they know not what they do." And—if, without presumption, I may ascend from earth to heaven—the uncreated God, in such measure as his nature is capable, partakes of this emotion; it is a beam of his glory; it is a drop from the unbounded ocean of his benevolence, the gushing of his own tenderness, the response of that affection which thrills through his heart. Say I these things of myself? Saith not the Lord the same also? "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the sinner; but that he turn from his way, and live." (O, what a conflict of emotions do those words disclose! What a struggle between the claims of justice and paternal love!) "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" And again: "When God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart."

But on what principle is this divine affection in the people of God? What are its elements? *A conviction of the evil of sin.* Its abominable character has been exposed to their view; they have seen its evil by the illumination of the divine Spirit; they have witnessed its destructive nature; they have tasted its aggravated

bitterness; they have felt its condemning power. Sirs, they have mourned for their own sins, and therefore they mourn for the sins of others. That is a spurious, counterfeit sort of sorrow, that leads men to mourn for the sins of others, but has not taught them to weep over their own. The Christian weeps over a world lost in wickedness. He sees, and cares to see, sin establishing, sin exercising, an almost universal dominion over our apostate race. He sees, and cares to see, sin intruding whole nations, sin shrouding them in darkness, sin subjecting them to the vilest idolatries, the cruelest superstitions, withering every comfort, deepening every wo, perpetuating man's curse through the revolutions of time, extinguishing the light of hope in his pathway to eternal glory, and preventing his participation of the divine nature. They are regenerate men; they are thus made partakers of a new and divine nature, and are exalted to share the sympathy, to hold fellowship with their Saviour, Jesus Christ; his joy is their joy; his grief is their grief; his glory is their glory; what he loves they love; and what he hates they hate. "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with a perfect hatred; I count them mine enemies."

This divine affection, too, is prompted *by compassion to the souls of men.* In the process of their own salvation they have learned in some measure the infinite value of a soul—the amazing cost of its redemption—the stupendous provision made for its final welfare—the deep, and bitter, and unfathomable anguish which awaits its impenitence. They grieve to see millions of their fellow creatures, the children of the same father, heirs of the same immortality, the purchase of the same redeeming blood as themselves, exposed to this terrible, this infinite doom.

The affection is also prompted *by zeal for the honour of God.* This is the object of their supreme, their ardent love. They love his honour, they prize his glory, more than their wealth, or fame, or liberty, or life; and to be the spectators

of his dishonour—to see him insulted, blasphemed, defied, assailed on his throne, dared to his face, his saints overcome, his law trampled under foot, and the usurper on his throne triumphing in the extent and security of his dominions—well may sorrows fill their hearts, and well may tears suffuse their eyes!

These acts, too, are prompted *by a due regard to their own welfare*. They know the danger to which surrounding impiety exposes them; they are not invulnerable to its influence—its approaches are contagious—familiarity may blunt their apprehension of them. They know, too, how largely they have contributed, in times past, to those abominations; and they know that, by a passive acquiescence in them, they will largely partake of the sin of them. They, therefore, boldly protest against them; and, in the power of individual exertion and combined effort, they hold conflict with the powers of darkness. They “sigh,” and they “cry” over the abomination of their fellow sinners.

I pass on, in *conclusion*, to remark **THOSE EXPRESSIONS OF THE DIVINE APPROBATION WITH WHICH THEIR CONDUCT IS DISTINGUISHED.**

The command was addressed to him whose office it was to set a mark on the men who thus sighed and cried—an allusion to the practice of marking the slaves of eastern princes, or of an idol-worshiper receiving the mark of his god on his forehead. They set a mark on the men who sigh and cry. An allusion to a similar practice occurs in other portions of the Scripture. In the memorable description of the slaying of the first-born in Egypt, the Israelites were marked—not the individuals, but by blood sprinkled upon the door-posts. In the mystical imagery of the Apocalypse, ere the destroying angels were permitted to smite the earth, the servants of God were sealed upon their foreheads. Is there not an allusion to the same practice in the history of the Messiah himself? “Him hath God the Father sealed”—by the voice of prophecy—by the evidence of miracles—by the anointing of the Holy Ghost, when he was set apart, marked out, consecrated to his illustrious office.

And am I bold in asserting, that, under the Christian dispensation, this symbolical action is gloriously realized?—that the servant of God is distinguished, not by the handwriting of an inferior agent—not by the signature of an angel on the conscience; but the living characters are imprinted by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, to cancel the sinner’s guilt, to secure the favour and friendship of the Almighty; and by the Holy Spirit of promise, whereby he is sealed unto the day of redemption, to obtain the glorious privileges of the sons of God—not only the privileges as servants, but as heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.

But if these marks are thought too obscure, too mystical, to be distinguished by others, there are some so evident, so palpable, as to be readily recognised by all. The sacred profession of the Christian, his devotion to God, his separation from the world, the holiness of his life, his sighing and crying over the abominations of the earth, his acts of piety to God and benevolence to man, mark him out in a manner that cannot be misunderstood. In the same way, also, the Christian church is marked by its divine institutions, its order, its purity, its harmony, its high designation, as “the light of the world,” and the depository of God’s truth—the apparatus with which it is furnished for the illumination and happiness of the whole race of man. This is what the prophet was permitted to see only in symbol, in that temple which he so minutely describes, and of which he said, “The name of the city, from that day, shall be, ‘The Lord is there.’” Never may that inscription be razed—never may “Ichabod” be placed in its stead; and may the glory in the midst of her never depart!

What advantages are secured by this to the people of God! In the transaction to which the text refers, it is supposed that it was the means of preservation from calamities. And have we not examples in history of similar deliverances? Thus Noah was rescued from the waters; Lot was delivered from the fires of Sodom; thus, in the terrific infliction of the plagues of Egypt, people were severed from peo-

ple, and cattle were severed from cattle. In the transaction to which I have adverted, in the book of Revelations, the minister of wrath, who was commissioned to pour out the vials of the anger of God, was commanded not to hurt the men who were marked with the seal of God in their foreheads. And in the memorable destruction of Jerusalem, by the Roman army, it is asserted, by the eminent historian Josephus, that the Christians, escaping to Pella, were there preserved from the shipwreck of their countrymen. And are there not Christian promises to warrant the assertion, that, in the time of public calamities, a special care will be exercised over the people of God by divine providence; and that, in the midst of those calamities which are designed to mark the displeasure of heaven against the guilty, the people of God, in their associated, in their aggregate capacity, shall be exempted; and on this principle, that they are redeemed from the guilt of their transgressions? They bewail them—they would prevent them—they would undo them—they testify against them; and, rescued from their guilt, they shall be preserved from their punishment. In the inflictions of God's hand there are no random strokes; every event has the direction of infinite wisdom and righteousness. "Them that honour me," saith God, "I will honour;" and he will be concerned for the welfare of them who are concerned for his honour.

It cannot be denied, however, that individual Christians frequently suffer chastisement: but may not these be regarded as exceptions from the general principle? I am aware that instances occur where the church at large suffers. Judgments may begin at the sanctuary—may begin at the house of God; because that house has been defiled by those very abominations which are the objects of the divine visitation. The church slumbers, and the cries of divine judgment shall rise higher: the church has been unfaithful to her trust, by refusing to walk in the light herself, or to impart that light to the world: she is corrupt; her gold is become dim, and her fine gold changed; it shall be made pure in the fires of

affliction: she has been disobedient, and therefore shall be rebuked and punished. In the case of individual Christians suffering, there may be, in the life of that individual, passages known only to God which might justify the visitation. They have not adequately exemplified the character described in the words of the text; they have not sighed and cried, as they ought, over the abominations of the land; their condemnation of them has not been so strong, their abhorrence has not been so severe, their resistance has not been so vigorous as it ought; they have viewed them with comparative indifference, if not with connivance. Since it cannot be denied that, on this account, many good men (good in the general tenor of their character) are permitted to suffer very largely in those calamities of which the wicked are the principal subjects, (even, although this character of God's people has been exemplified, where the individual sighed and cried over the abominations around him,) still, it is beyond all controversy, that, in cases of that nature, the calamity falls on them much more lightly than upon others; they suffer *with* them, but not *like* them; the severity is mitigated, the bitterness is extracted, the sting is withdrawn; it is no longer a punishment, but an instrument of instruction, and a blessing; the promise of God is fulfilled—the man delivers his soul; the man is saved; the casket is destroyed, but the jewel is preserved. God makes up to his servant his sufferings by an abundant communication of his grace, by a glorious triumph over them, and by that eternal weight of glory to which this very suffering more immediately conducts him, and for which (I ought to add) it has more properly prepared him.

Now, it would be a very inadequate view of the advantages resulting from this, to confine them to the mitigation of this fear: the fear of national punishment exists still; but the curse upon the individual is deeper and more lasting; it fills all the soul; it wounds more painfully; but it comes not near any man who is sealed with the mark of God's approbation. Though, indeed, trouble may surround him on every hand, the presence

of God is his pavilion, and in his tabernacle is he hid. Darkness may overspread the land, but in him there is light. The storm may rage, but the voice of the Son of God speaks to him within, "Peace, be still." God is his sun and light in darkness; God is his shield and defence in danger; he gives him grace to sustain, to comfort, to animate; he gives him glory as his eternal recompense and reward. To the visitations of his displeasure, to the anguish of a guilty conscience, to the fears and terrors of an anxious and distracted mind, to the sting of death, to the inflictions of the final judgment,—to all these messengers of his wrath he says, "Come not near any man upon whom is the mark: I will spare him as a man spareth his son that serveth him." And, marshalled in glorious array, out of every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, they shall stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion, having their Father's name written on their foreheads.

Brethren, I must address a word to those of you, if those there be, who by continued impenitence and transgression are adding to the amount of the nation's and the world's abominations. Others weep for you, but ah! you refuse to weep for yourselves! You are bold in your impiety! You glory in your shame! The heavens reveal your iniquity, the earth cries out against you. If any have need to weep, you are the individuals; if any have need to tremble, you are the men. You have brought God's displeasure on your souls; you have contributed to bring on your nation the sore judgments of the Almighty. Our commerce shakes as a reed in the wind—distraction perplexes our national councils—men's hearts fail them under the apprehension of some unknown convulsion; and the angel of the pestilence has planted his foot on our shores, and brandishes his sword over the length and breadth of the land. If any have need to tremble, you are the men; for "who knoweth, O God, the power of thine anger?" Others weep for you; the people of God weep for you; the ministers of the gospel weep for you; if angels weep, their tears are shed on your account; your Saviour has wept,

and still makes intercession for you—because you will not have compassion upon yourselves. Will you not bewail your sins, and renounce your transgressions? "Rend your hearts, and not your garments; and turn to the Lord your God;" and then shall our mourning be turned into joy; no more shall we weep, but shall rejoice over you; there shall be joy in the presence of the angels, and a thrill of infinite delight shall vibrate through the whole creation.

I must say a word to those who, though not equally contributing to swell the amount of the world's transgression, are not moved and affected as they ought to be. If this be your character—if you can behold the transgressions, and not be grieved—if you can see God dishonoured—his divine Son crucified afresh—the office of the Holy Spirit defeated of the gracious purposes of its operations; if you can see the havoc of sin—the perdition of souls—millions of your fellow creatures sealed in darkness and death; if you can see lamentation, and mourning, and wo, and famine, and pestilence, and plague, desolating the earth as the fruits of sin—if you can see all this, and utter no prayer, and send no cry, and make no effort, what estimate must be formed of your character? If to weep over sin be the affection of the Saviour—to delight in it, to view it with complacency, or even apathy, is the affection of the devil. Fools make a mock at sin. Is this your character? Are you reckless of that doom? Will you not rather weep over those sins for which your Saviour died? May your heart of stone be turned into a heart of flesh! May bowels of mercy be given to you, to teach you to grieve and to lament over the sins and sorrows of mankind!

But I rejoice to believe that I am surrounded by many who have long sighed and cried—who have, year after year, mourned and lamented over the abominations of the earth. What shall I say to you? Sigh on, cry on; never cease to bewail—never cease to deplore these abominations; never cease standing, as betwixt the living and the dead, to supplicate the mercy of God for man, and to

testify to man against his wickedness; never cease the voice of intercession for your fellow creatures, to implore the mercy of the divine compassion; and never cease to resist the abounding ungodliness around you. And let not your lamentations end in fruitless regret, in unavailing sorrow; let them not be artificial tears that you shed—the heartless effusions of a morbid sensibility; nor let them be cheap sorrows, sorrows that cost you nothing. Show me the value of them to-night; give me a proof, in the amount of your contributions, to what extent they go. Convince me that your feelings, and griefs, and sympathies, are deep, and genuine, and influential, and operative. Convince me to-night that they teach you to offer—ay, to sacrifice—something for the advancement of those objects which, you declare, excite these emotions. Does your heart say, “Here am I—send me?” And if you cannot go yourself, what can you do but send others? And while others cry out against the abominations of the earth, in places where you cannot go, sustain them by your prayers and by your efforts. Let your provision for the sending of these messengers be large and liberal; for in proportion to the magnitude of the enterprise must be the magnitude of the means. Cry to God for the influence of his Holy Spirit to succeed their labours; for the effusion of his Holy Spirit upon yourselves, upon your families, upon the church, upon the world at large. Prayer and pains, with God’s blessing, are never in vain; he puts your tears into his bottle; he registers your prayers in his book; and, though he bears long with the elect, he will avenge them speedily. Think not that by these contributions you deduct from your happiness: there is a joy in grief—there is a luxury in tears. Though now you sow in tears, you shall reap in joy; though now your harps hang on the willows, they shall be shortly strung to notes of gladness and triumph. The groaning of the creation shall be hushed; the crimes that pollute it, and the woes that desolate it, shall end; the sad reign of ignorance and sin shall be no more; the year of release shall come; the earth shall resound

with the songs of the jubilee; the tabernacle of God shall be with men; and he shall wipe all tears from their eyes. “A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. Thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border.” Amen and amen.

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JUDGMENT.

WHENEVER I enter a court of human judicature, I cannot but be impressed with solemnity by the objects which arrest my attention, and the deep and touching emotions they awake in my mind. I am standing in a place venerable as the abode of justice, a place where many an unhappy fellow creature has listened to the sentence that has doomed him to perpetual exile from all that his heart holds dear—his country, his kindred, and his home; or else, to render satisfaction to the laws which he has violated by an untimely and ignominious death. Yonder sits the judge, whose appearance, whose character, whose office, all conspire to fill me with veneration and awe. On either hand are the officers of justice, whose part it is, with iron grasp, to seize and retain their victim, deaf alike to his threats and his promises, his entreaties and his tears. I now suffer my eyes to wander through the crowded court, and observe the numerous spectators, lured thither, some by curiosity, and others by motives of a more powerful character. Most are deeply attentive to the solemn proceedings, few seem unconcerned; and, as the witnesses on either side give in their evidence, and the advocates produce their arguments and pour forth their eloquence, I catch the general enthusiasm that is kindled in the assembly, and become deeply interested too. How intense, and even agonizing, is that interest, if the life of the prisoner is at stake! I imperceptibly identify myself with him, and my imagination becomes busy in realizing the horrors of his situation. He may be guilty;

his crime may be heinous; it may have been connected with circumstances of deep aggravation; he may not be a criminal to whom the monarch's clemency should be extended; but he is a man, and no consideration can destroy the feelings of humanity which the sight of a fellow creature, at such an awful crisis, must inspire. I mark with eagerness every passage in the charge delivered by the judge to the jury, as it seems to bear upon his doom. While those are deliberating, on whose verdict his fate now depends, every moment is like an hour of unsufferable suspense, and my heart sickens at the voice that pronounces him guilty. The shriek that he utters enters into my soul; and, long after I have left the court, the countenance of the criminal is before my eyes, and the solemn sentence of the judge is sounding in my ears—I think of the infamy connected with a ruined character; the misery entailed upon the wretched partner of his bosom and his innocent babes; the horrors and the ignominy of a prison; the fettered limbs, the condemned cell, the last agonizing interview with a wife, a mother, a sister, a child; the last rites of religion, the awful preparation, the tolling of the bell, the apparatus of death; and I shudder at the conviction that, but for the restraining grace of God, all those dreadful images that rise to my imagination might have been realized in the closing scene of my own earthly existence.

But we rise to a far higher and more dreadful tribunal; a tribunal at which, not merely you and I, but all the world must stand, not as idle spectators, to listen to the doom of others, but deeply interested in its grand transactions and irrevocable decrees; a tribunal at which,

not the actions merely, but the thoughts of men are judged; a tribunal at which, not a fellow mortal like ourselves, but the Searcher of hearts presides; a tribunal from whose judicial process there is no escape, in whose proceedings there is no partiality, to whose scrutiny there is no deception, from whose decisions there is no appeal, and in whose destinies are involved, not the interests of time, or the life of the body, but the unchanging, unalterable condition of our immortal existence! Our Redeemer speaks of *a day and an hour in which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, some to the resurrection of life, and some to the resurrection of damnation.* On that day, and that hour, your attention should be deeply fixed. The humiliating lesson of your own pollution and depravity; the cheering assurance of pardon, and peace, and eternal life, through the perfect obedience and atoning sacrifice of the Son of God; the absolute necessity of the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit to make you fit for heaven,—may have but little in them to interest you; but the strange scenes and awful transactions of judgment will give a fearful interest to them all. Though you may neglect and despise them now, they will then rise again to the contemplation of your mind. The reflection that the Judge, the pomp and splendour of whose coming are bursting rapidly upon your sight, is the very Saviour whom you rejected and despised, will be like an arrow dipped in the deadliest poison, that shall rankle for ever in your veins; and nothing, in all the terrible appearances of nature around you, will appear half so dreadful as your own infatuation and guilt, in neglecting this great salvation!

## SERMON LII.

### THE QUESTION OF MIRACLES CONSIDERED.

BY THE REV. JOHN STYLES, D.D.

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“*And now abideth faith, hope, charity—these three; but the greatest of these is charity.*”—  
1 Cor. xiii. 13.

My brethren, I have more than once discoursed to you in this place, upon the subjects presented to us in the words which I have now read. But in those addresses I confined myself to the general topics which they unfold. I did not call your attention to the precise argument of the apostle, as to the conclusions which he had especially in view. On the present occasion, and for a particular purpose, I feel it to be necessary to offer to your consideration the design and scope of the whole chapter.

If ever it was incumbent upon the ministers of our most holy faith to set themselves against the delusions and absurdities of fanaticism, it is at this moment, when individuals of imposing talents, and of great influence, from the sanctity of their manners, and their acknowledged zeal, are unwittingly, as I am fain to believe, devoting their whole moral and intellectual energy to the propagation of tenets, and the exhibition of extravagancies, which, so far as they are suffered to prevail, threaten to root all religion from the minds of men, and to render the very name of Christianity a byword and a reproach. Already this monstrous evil is powerfully at work. Novices are caught in the subtle snare, and infidelity begins to triumph. The weak are carried away by pretensions which dazzle and confound them, and the wicked malignantly exclaim, “Aha! aha! so would we have it.”

A name of some eminence is gathering

round itself the fumes of an intoxicating vanity, at the expense of whatsoever things are true, lovely, and of good report. The greatest enemies of faith are the credulous, and of the truth, those who propagate the errors that best counterfeit its similitude.

The doctrines of Christianity have often been metamorphosed into gross and palpable heresies. But it was reserved for the heresiarch of the Scottish church to disturb the foundation of its evidence by converting its miracles into the juggleries of a mountebank. Surrounded by his coterie of inspired damsels, he is setting himself up for a prophet, while his vaticinations are made oracular by the appalling yells and contortions of his attendant sybils. He is hailed as another Elijah, and their unmeaning jargon is the credential relied upon as the infallible evidence of the divinity of his mission. Such is the state of things at this moment in the most enlightened city in the world, and in an age when Christianity, without the aid of any other miracles than those wrought by Christ and his apostles, as they are recorded in the sacred books, has subverted so many heathen altars, and diffused its influence through so many nations of pagan idolaters. To reason with persons who are ingeniously insane would be a hopeless attempt. But there are multitudes to whom the subject has all the charm of novelty—who are awed by the very assumption of supernatural powers by

persons of whose devout character they entertain a favourable opinion, and who know not how to meet the argument, which, to their uninformed understandings, appear to be derived from the Scriptures.

These we may be able to disabuse, and to save from the moral epidemic to the ravages of which they are peculiarly exposed from the temperament of their minds, and the insidious contagion which forces itself upon them under so many impressive forms of sanctity and religion. Let us, then, with the implored assistance of that Holy Spirit, "without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy," endeavour to meet the question of miraculous gifts and endowments. "To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

The oracle of the new fanaticism maintains that the Scriptures uphold him in his pretensions. He assures us that they are the sole authority to which he refers the decision of his claims. We deny that his assumptions receive any, the slightest support from the source on which he relies, and that the apostle, in the argument of which our text is the conclusion, is directly opposed to them. And this statement we shall endeavour to make good, as we hope, to the satisfaction of all impartial inquiries into the truth on this important branch of the Christian revelation. Lest we should, even for a moment, be suspected of misrepresenting the dogmas to which we are opposed, we have carefully consulted the most recent and laboured publication in which they are unfolded; and, as far as we have been able to collect the notions which are there wrought out into a new system of divinity on the subject of supernatural endowments, they may be reduced to the two following propositions:—

I. THAT THE MIRACULOUS ENDOWMENTS POSSESSED BY CHRIST, AND THE INSPIRED TEACHERS OF THE APOSTOLIC AGE, ARE THE PERPETUAL INHERITANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH; and,

II. THAT THE CHURCH (IN WHICH THIS DOCTRINE IS TAUGHT) LAYS CLAIM TO

THESE ENDOWMENTS, AND IS IN THE PRESENT EXERCISE OF THE POWERS WHICH THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO CONFER.

Both these propositions it shall be our present business to examine and invalidate.

1. The first, namely, *that the power of working miracles, to the full extent in which it was exerted by Christ and his apostles, is the grand dowry, the pre-eminent distinction, the perpetual inheritance of the church, to be exercised by her through all her successive generations*, is an assumption which, while it indicates a perverted understanding, it is to be feared has its chief origin in the heart.

The abettors of this extravagant notion have been hurried into its adoption by the confusion which exists in their minds regarding the distinction, the plain and obvious distinction, which the Scriptures everywhere teach us to recognise between miraculous operation and divine influence. Both are predicted in the Old Testament and the New; both are subjects of express assurance and promise; and the delusion of the modern prophets seems to arise from their inability to discriminate between them. Hence the predictions and promises which refer to the latter, chiefly or exclusively, are interpreted as applying equally to the former. When the grace only of the Holy Spirit is assured as the perpetual inheritance of the church, because it is associated with the extraordinary manifestation of his gifts, the assurance is supposed to extend an equal duration to both. That which is temporary is confounded with what is permanent; and pretensions, set up in behalf of the Christian dispensation, as a dispensation of miracles, which are totally incompatible with its character, as a system of moral evidence and spiritual influence.

My brethren, we contend that there is no evidence in the Scriptures to support the assertion that supernatural powers are to be placed at the disposal of the church for any definite period. All that we can learn from the sacred record is, *that they were promised, and that they were given*. But, on the subject of the

Holy Spirit's influence, and his indwelling in all believers to the end of time, the proofs are numerous, specific, and unequivocal. And, in our apprehension, no words are adequate to express the excellence and dignity of the gift of the Divine Spirit, as the renovator, comforter, and sanctifier of the church. It is in truth, as has been well observed by an eloquent Christian writer, 'the great promise of the Christian economy, and stands in nearly the same relation to us, that the coming of the Messiah did to pious Jews before his advent.' Though it has been imparted from the beginning until now, we are still to live in the daily expectation of its more copious effusion. For it is the promise of the Father—the promise comprehending all the illumination and holiness of the church, and without which nothing can be done to any important purpose in religion. The great error of the fanatics, as we have said, is in mistaking the nature of this gift, and confounding it with miraculous endowments, not remembering that the one is indispensable both now and for ever, while the others were intended only to subserve a temporary necessity, and, with that necessity, were destined to pass away.

This delusion is further strengthened in the minds of those who entertain it, *by the confessedly miraculous character of that special providence, which regulates the affairs, and accomplishes the destinies of the church.* The miracles which are thus wrought in her behalf, and without her intervention, evince the continued agency of a Being invested with all power, both in heaven and on earth, and who is carrying forward the great plan of his government in conformity with the scheme of prophecy, guiding and controlling events, depressing or exalting individuals and nations, with a view to the perfect establishment and universal extension of his spiritual kingdom. Whenever he puts forth his power in opposition to the natural course of things, and works out the purposes of his own will by an energy which not only conquers the antagonist powers of the world, but renders them subservient to the very designs they

are united to frustrate—miraculous interposition must be acknowledged; but, then, it is interposition which asks not the aid of human agency; it requires neither prophets to foretell, nor orators in unknown tongues to declaim. With this wise arrangement, however, which holds the Deity and the creature each in his proper sphere, the modern advocates of supernatural gifts are not satisfied; they desire to be of the divine council, to be the interpreters of the movements of his providence, and to share with him the work and the glory of subjugating the earth to themselves as his favoured viceroyants. This, I am persuaded, is at the root of all the sophistry with which they have laboured to support the general proposition of the continuance and perpetuity of miraculous powers in the church; and thus, it is to be feared, the true source of all their misguided zeal, in upholding this dangerous doctrine, is to be found in *the pride and manifold selfishness of the human heart.* What but insufferable arrogance could induce the imagination that, through the long course of time, as an ordinary and common occurrence, men and women should be found wielding the prerogatives of omnipotence—nay, endowed with, and exercising higher powers than the Son of God himself! What is this but degrading Deity, for the purpose of exalting our fallen human nature to his throne; and, in the case of individual assumption, can we conceive any thing more daring? Has the apostate seraph, even in the pride which cast him down from his excellency, equalled in audacity the self-important child of earth, who ventures to tell the God of heaven that he will emulate, and even exceed him in the miraculous and divine works which he performed in confirmation of his mission? If this be honouring the Spirit, it is honouring one divine person at the expense of another, and thus it is an insult to both. When I read such language I pause, and feel that my only choice is between blasphemy and insanity. If it be insanity, it has its origin in that pride which, at last, gains the mastery of the understanding. If it be blasphemy, it

seems to approach that of the man of sin, who exalteth himself above all that is called God.

We ought not, however, to be surprised at this in a case of mere delusion, which has its sole origin in the weakness and depravity of human nature, when we consider that, in the primitive age, the actual possession of what is now only pretended, was accompanied by the most extravagant abuses; so that, instead of being consecrated to the glory of the donor, the gifts of the Spirit were set in opposition to his influences; and those pre-eminently qualified to advance the spiritual prosperity of the church, by a base prostitution of their extraordinary powers became its greatest disturbers—the worst enemies of its peace. To the abuses thus engendered we are, however, mainly indebted for this epistle to the Corinthian believers, which, among other important objects, is intended by St. Paul to regulate the exercise of their miraculous gifts, so that the evils of which he takes cognizance might be corrected, till the period of their total withdrawal should arrive—an event which the apostle, in very clear and explicit terms in the chapter before us, has predicted. No doubt these abuses were permitted by the inscrutable wisdom of Heaven, for the purpose of preparing the church generally for the new order of things about to be introduced.

Almost from the beginning she had been accustomed to attach undue importance to her miraculous powers—to regard them as indispensable to her existence; the notion of their perpetuity almost universally obtained; and, amidst the imposing splendours of preternatural phenomena, the influences not less divine that were silent and unostentatious, working imperceptibly in the formation of character, were frequently overlooked, or regarded as subordinate and inferior, as comparatively insignificant and worthless. This was the state of the church at Corinth when St. Paul addressed to them his epistle, clothed with all the authority of his apostolical mission. The crisis had arrived, and the wise and holy were in a situation to receive his announce-

ments with humility and acquiescence. In the preceding chapter he enumerates the various gifts which had so long distinguished this church, and which, in a greater or less degree, were the universal inheritance of all the collected bodies of the faithful. He arranges them in their proper order, according to their relative value, and inculcates the necessity of their just and profitable distribution for the benefit of the whole.

To the same purpose is the fourteenth chapter, which contains a variety of salutary exhortations, all tending to restrain their exercise within the limits of order and usefulness. It is in this chapter however that he more than intimates their temporary nature, and final disappearance. But he prepares the way gradually, and by a train of reasoning which shows how thoroughly he was aware of the prejudices he had to encounter, and which he was anxious to overcome. He evidently feels that he had to contend with an excessive attachment to these miraculous endowments, rather than to fall in with any indifference as to their importance, or with any disposition to relinquish them. In the first place he not only announces the possibility of their being dissociated from genuine piety, and that divine influence which renovates the heart and fits it for the enjoyment of heaven, but he strongly implies the fact of this dissociation. He assumes the salutary but neglected warning of our Lord, that “many in the day of judgment would address him in the language of unavailing expostulation. Have we not cast out devils in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful works?” To whom he represents himself as replying, “Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, I never knew you.” He proceeds on the principle that these gifted disciples of their master ought not “to rejoice that the demons were subject to them, but rather that their names were written in the book of life.” How liable even the workers of miracles were to fatal delusion, and how little qualified by their supernatural gifts to profit by the saving influences of the Holy Spirit, he intimates in the implied contrast between the charity of

which he pronounces the eulogy and the moral dispositions of these gifted persons; he represents them as envious, vaunting in their pride, puffed up with their own conceit, behaving themselves unseemly, rapacious and selfish, unstable and censorious, regardless of the truth, but rejoicing in iniquity, suspicious, incredulous of good, impatient under restraint and opposition. A more unlovely portraiture can hardly be imagined. The very opposite of all the graces which adorn and dignify the Christian character. Yet with all these moral deformities he describes them as endowed with the gift of tongues, as being able to prophesy and understand all mysteries, as possessing supernatural knowledge, as having the faith of miracles to remove mountains, as ostentatious in their almsgiving, and as indulging in this virtue to such an excess as to give all their goods to the poor. Nay he intimates their readiness to become martyrs to their profession and the cause they had espoused. A mixture of strange qualities, but none of them implying those graces which are the evidences of a real change of heart. From all this he infers that, though extraordinary endowments are excellent in themselves, they are not unfrequently combined with some of the most odious vices which can corrupt the human heart.

And indeed, my brethren, it must be admitted that gifts have ever been very questionable distinctions. They require for their regulation a corresponding measure of grace. As far as the individuals who possessed them are concerned, they appear to have been imparted for the trial of character rather than for its formation. In proportion to the magnitude of these endowments is the degree of responsibility which they involve. In the primitive church such distinctions were often a two-edged sword, which while it cut down the phalanx of infidel opposition proved fatal to the assailant himself. The faith to remove mountains too often superseded the faith that was to save the soul. The prophesying which cheered others with a hope full of immortality, had no power over him who held it forth, and he stumbled from the precipice to the

gulf below. The gift of tongues that charmed multitudes as with the eloquence of an angel, annihilated in the bosom of its possessor that charity which is the bond of perfectness and an indispensable passport to the inheritance of the saints in light. This argument the apostle suggested to moderate the attachment of the Corinthians to the miraculous powers with which they were favoured, and to increase the ardour of their desires after the more excellent way, or the attainment of the saving graces of the Christian life.

In furtherance of the same object he represents these miraculous powers as *suiited only to the infancy of the church—as appertaining properly to her childhood.* “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, but when I became a man I put away childish things.” This illustration has no relevancy unless as pointing out the precise object of miracles, which is to attest a divine mission and to confirm a divine revelation till both are consummated, and no longer. The very idea of perpetual miracles is a natural absurdity and a contradiction in terms. There would be infinite danger in continuing them beyond the limits of their necessity. Nature would thus be deprived of those laws which are the most luminous credentials of the almighty power which created and sustains her; and religion would lose all the force of the moral evidence by which she appeals to the reason and the conscience of intelligent and accountable beings.

If God speaks to men, to communicate a revelation of his mind and will through the medium of a being like themselves, he must furnish that being with credentials which give assurance that he is neither a fanatic nor an impostor. If the death of that being under extraordinary circumstances, and as one of the ends of his mission, be a part of the wonderful economy which he is to establish—and a number of doctrines, prophecies, promises, and precepts, all of them possessing a divine character, are to be communicated to the world subsequent to this event and arising out of it—it is obviously necessary that the witnesses, and the instru-

ments who in his absence are to carry forward his design to its consummation should be clothed with adequate powers to enable them to accomplish their task; and no power short of that of performing miracles ought to satisfy mankind that they are the accredited expounders of their master's will. Now the case supposed applies literally to the mission of Jesus Christ upon earth, and the part which his apostles and their immediate converts had to act immediately after his resurrection from the dead, and till the completion of their infallible word of testimony in the gospels and epistles of the New Testament. The miracles of Christ displayed not only a divine power, but they were singularly distinguished by an ethical excellence in perfect harmony with the benevolence and purity of his religion; and they likewise bore a prophetic character, indicative of the kind of influence which that religion was henceforth to exert over mankind; but they ceased with his life.

The miracles of the apostles were performed for the purpose of attesting his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into heaven, as well as all the doctrines they heard from his lips, and all the events which they had known in his history, of which they were credible and competent witnesses. The gifts of a supernatural order imparted to those on whom the apostles laid their hands qualified them to teach the infallible truths of the religion they had embraced—which were not at that time imbodyed in the written form of the inspired books—to meet all the extraordinary exigencies of the infant church, to build her up in her most holy faith, to direct her in difficulty and in duty, to console and animate her amidst persecution and martyrdom, and to extend the trophies of her Redeemer among all nations, kindreds, people, and tongues.

Such in brief, my brethren, was the precise object and intention of miracles and the gifts of the Spirit in the apostolic age; their continuance, therefore, is limited by the infant necessities of Christians just gathered out of the world, without that perfect revelation, the completion

and general circulation of which were to mark the period that should terminate her childhood; and for this period the apostle prepares the Corinthians, by intimating that her state of pupilage was about to expire; and that it was high time for her to be looking forward for those nobler endowments which bespoke her approach to maturity.

St. Paul then proceeds more distinctly to unfold *the great inferiority even of miraculous gifts, intrusted to living, changeable, and fallible men, to the complete and permanent developement of the divine will as revealed in the written oracles*. In these pages the objects of faith are unclouded with obscurity, every truth rises in its just proportions, and all combined together in perfect symmetry, appears, not with the shadowy indistinctness of a form reflected from a mirror, but with the daylight truth and accuracy which reveals objects as they are, and of which we are conscious, when, instead of contemplating the features of a friend in a glass darkly, we see him face to face.

My brethren, it is better to read the prophecies than to hear the prophets—to receive the revelation of the Spirit, appealing to us in characters which never can be mistaken, than to hear one man speak in an unknown tongue and another man interpret. It is better to gain knowledge from the source than to receive it through the discolouring channel of human passions and infirmity. We have every kind of spiritual information in the Bible; all the prophecies that shall ever be revealed, all the precepts that can ever be enforced; while the different gifted personages in the apostolic times, notwithstanding their extraordinary endowments, were forced to content themselves with saying, "We know in part and we prophesy in part." The gospel is its own witness, and the greatest standing miracle that has been vouchsafed to the world. It imbodyes all other miracles, presents them in the form of testimony, and combines with them the evidence of astonishing agreement and consistency. It portrays a character of absolute perfection without a blemish, without an infirmity, a miracle infinitely beyond the

power of frail imperfect man to invent or conceive. It displays in its writers a sublimity which surpasses human comprehension—a divine prescience, in mere men, which establishes their claim to a spirit beyond humanity—a unity of object which, separated as they were by time and distance, proclaims a single all-pervading mind—and in their characters an approximation to the goodness they delight to celebrate, altogether wonderful. Inspiration glows in every page, purity shines in all its precepts, and its doctrines shed celestial radiance on the character of God, the destiny of man, the realities and glories of a world to come.

With this book in our hands the only miracle we want is the union and devotedness, the universal charity and heavenly aspirations, of all who profess and call themselves Christians.

In carrying forward his great argument, the apostle, with an abruptness and power not unusual in his rapturous style of writing, opposes *the temporary gifts of the church, to the absolute perfection of the heavenly state*. We are never to consider St. Paul merely as a reasoner and logician, but as a Christian imbued with the spirit of his destiny, always ready to take his seraphic flight, always realizing to himself the consummation of his hopes as the predestined inhabitant of a world where ignorance, sin, and the necessary imperfections of the present state, are for ever unknown: thus, while establishing the temporary character of the miraculous endowments which were so much overrated by the persons he addressed, his eagle spirit soars on high to its native eyry in the heavens; he drinks light from the fountain of radiance; and, as if already surrounded with the glories of the beatific vision, he exclaims, but “now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know as even also I am known.” From the height of this transcendent state of intellect and feeling, he descends again to earth, and, beholding the church about to be divested of its miraculous endowments, he describes *the things which are to cease, in striking contrast with those which are to remain; and*

in a strain of eloquence peculiar to inspiration, he breaks forth in the annunciation of a fact which was shortly to be realized, “Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, (supernaturally imparted,) it shall vanish away;” and the conclusion of the whole is this, now “abideth faith, hope, and charity—these three; but the greatest of these is charity.” In the last sentence is comprehended all that is permanent and unchangeable in the earthly inheritance of believers, all that the church may reasonably hope to acquire, all that shall constitute her real wealth.

Here, then, we have a distinct prediction, explicitly stating the extinction of all that is to be considered as strictly supernatural in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and all that is to continue as the result of divine influence to the end of time. Now, all that we have to ascertain in reference to this argument and its conclusion, so forcibly conveyed by the term “abides,” and the other expressions, “cease,” and “vanish away,” is the testimony of fact. If it can be proved that miracles have continued to be performed in the Christian church during the whole era of its existence, then it must be admitted that we have erred in our exposition of the apostolic revelation on the subject; but if it can be clearly established that the facts of the case corroborate and support our interpretation, the conclusion is inevitable—that we have rightly understood and applied it.

With those who have an hypothesis to support, it is a favourite assumption that miraculous gifts were continued up to the time when Constantine gave the sanction of law to the gospel, and established Christianity as the religion of the Roman empire. But the evidence of such a fact is by no means conclusive. I have examined the subject with that serious attention which its importance deserves, and I have arrived at the conclusion which an eminent writer has succinctly stated in the following words. Speaking of the post-apostolical miracles, Dr. Jortin observes,—“I would not engage for the truth of any of them after the year

of our Lord 107." The same writer has divided the era of Christian miracles into four periods; the first period, he remarks, contains those which are recorded in the New Testament, and reaches to about the year 70 of the Christian era—of these there can be no doubt among Christians: the next period may be of thirty-seven years, and ends about A. D. 107. "There is reason," he adds, "to think it probable that some miracles were then performed by those that preached and planted the gospel in pagan countries. The third reaches from thence to Constantine. The last period is from Constantine to where you please!" My own conviction is, that miracles, through the medium of human agency, were confined to the first period, and that there is not sufficient evidence to give them validity beyond this epoch. I do not, however, deny that they were affirmed as having been performed by contemporary writers down to the second and third centuries, but all that we can really ascertain is comprised in the admission that, during "these latter periods, some sick persons were restored to health by the prayers of their brethren; that some virtuous pagans had their doubts and prejudices removed, and were called to Christianity by divine impulses, dreams, or visions; and that the martyrs and confessors received an extraordinary assistance from God, enabling them to undergo terrible tortures and sufferings with amazing patience and constancy." This is the amount of all that is fairly established by evidence; and that it differs very materially from what may be properly considered as miraculous, and which distinguished the first age of Christianity, must be admitted by all who are competent to form a judgment on questions of this nature. This difference principally consists in the following particulars:—"They were not foretold by prophets—they were not wrought by prophets—they contained in them no prophetic indications of future events—no man ever laid down his life, or ever suffered distress and persecution in attestation of them."\* Indeed, we feel persuaded that any impartial mind, ap-

\* Jortin's Remarks, &c.

plying itself to the investigation of this subject, must conclude that no miracles, properly so called, existed after the death of the apostles and the individuals supernaturally endowed by the imposition of their hands.

But granting, for the sake of argument only, that they extended to the time of Constantine and then ceased, we have more than sixteen hundred years in which every rational pretence to their existence is abandoned. Does not this triumphantly support the declaration of the apostle, "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away?"

The total withdrawal of these miraculous functions from the fathers and members of the Christian church during so long a period—a period comprehending four-fifths of the entire era of her existence—a period during which her exigencies, perils, and triumphs, have equalled and sometimes exceeded those of her pristine condition—clearly indicates that their perpetuity formed no part of the original design of heaven, and that the providence of God, and the saving influence of his Spirit accompanying the diffusion of his truth, are abundantly sufficient, without the aid of miracles, to accomplish all his purposes of mercy to mankind. Seasons have occurred, during the lapse of many centuries, in which, if miracles had been consistent with the general economy of the divine government, we may be assured that they would not have been withheld. Could a more fitting occasion for their employment be imagined than the appearance of the man of sin, clothing himself with divine attributes, and with all deceivableness and lying wonders usurping the throne of the Redeemer, by pretending to the very powers which he had adduced as infallible criterions of his own mission? If miracles had any other design than to attest that mission, and to accompany the revelation founded upon it to its closing page, would they have been denied to the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth, to the Waldenses, and the Hussites!—to Wickliffe and the suffering

martyrs who followed in his train? Would they not have aided the triumphant march of the fathers of the reformation in Germany, in France, and in Britain? Would they not have preceded or attended the revivals of religion which at different periods and in various provinces of the church have evinced the presence and the vivifying power of the Spirit from on high? But if any thing would seem to demand them as necessary to the accomplishment of its object, it is the missionary enterprise; and if any members of the church of Christ might be considered as in the properest state of mind, and heart, and spirit, to receive the powers which they imply, and to exercise them, (more especially the gift of tongues,) would they not be the zealous and indefatigable missionaries who are labouring to propagate the gospel in pagan and idolatrous countries?

Theologians, remarkable for the sobriety of their minds and at the farthest possible distance from fanaticism, have affirmed that the possession of miraculous gifts is necessary as a sign, before sober men ought to allow themselves to take part in the conversion of the heathen. Grotius maintained, that if any person were employed in it at this day, in a manner agreeable to the will of our Lord, he would find himself endued with the power of working miracles. Archbishop Tillotson speaks to the same effect. "I think it very credible," he observes, "that if persons of sincere minds did go to preach the pure Christian religion to infidel nations, that God would still enable such persons to work miracles, without which there would be little or no probability of success." Dr. Barrow has expressed the same opinion. But, my brethren, of how little value are opinions which vanish before the light of experience! Good and sincere, enlightened and devoted Christian men, have in this great enterprise visited the remotest regions of the earth, and have taken up their abode among civilized and savage idolaters, among people of every grade of intellect, and exhibiting all the varieties of the human

condition, but all equally the slaves of a cruel and demoralizing superstition.

Here, if anywhere, is presented a wide field for working miracles; and these are the very individuals on whom these gifts might be expected to descend. But in their high and perilous vocation they make no pretensions to any powers beyond those implied in the doctrines they teach, and the divine Presence with them in the form of spiritual influence, which is termed "the demonstration of the Spirit," and this they find to be abundantly sufficient; and our own times have presented the astonishing spectacle of whole nations of pagans casting away their idols, embracing the true faith of Christ, and worshipping "God, who is a spirit, in spirit and in truth;" and all this without the aid of a single miracle. The missionaries spent many years in acquiring the languages of the natives, lived among them as the protesting witnesses of their idolatrous and abominable crimes, and without any power to rebuke them, except what they derived from the purity of their manners and the fervours of a devout and heavenly charity. As soon as they had qualified themselves by reducing unwritten languages to a grammatical form and construction, and mastering the difficulties of unheard-of idioms, which, for a long time, baffled their sagacity, and rendered all their conjectures vain, they opened their commission—they taught in the plainest manner the pure and simple truths of the gospel—they endured the coldness of neglect, the bitterness of scorn, the cruelty of malice, and the vengeance of the demon-priests whose superstitions they assailed. To such men, and in such circumstances, how necessary, in all human apprehension, were the preternatural gifts with which the first propagators of Christianity were endowed! But they were not vouchsafed—they were not even sought, yet did not the missionaries labour in vain. Polynesia, with all her tribes, attests the power of truth, and are living evidences that the greatest moral results may be achieved by the simplest means—and that where there is spiritual

influence there needs not the co-operation of miraculous power.

Thus have we brought down our inquiry to the nineteenth century, without any evidence to support the favourite notion of miraculous gifts being the perpetual dowry of the Christian church; nay, with the strongest proofs that from the first century to the last they have been withdrawn. Can it, therefore, be reasonably maintained that the various predictions of the ancient prophets, and the promises of our Lord and his apostles, bear out the interpretation which our modern enthusiasts have endeavoured to fix upon them?

These predictions and promises are either absolute or conditional. If the former, upon the hypothesis against which we are contending, then is the mission of the Saviour and the religion which stands on this only foundation a vain pretence, an imposture openly exposed in the face of the whole world to derision and contempt. If the latter, we then ask for the condition? We have a right to demand what it is that was included in the predictions, inattention to which has deprived believers through so many ages and generations of this the grand distinction, the crowning glory of the faith which they have professed. On the supposition that the prophecies pointed exclusively to the period of the apostolate, and that they were unconditional, they have been fulfilled, and events have justified all that had been previously foretold. We have then a sure word of prophecy, to which we do well to take heed.

The present advocates for the perpetuity of these supernatural functions, aware of the fact that they have ceased for the space of seventeen hundred years, inform us that they were withdrawn through the guilt of the church in having "foregone this, her inheritance, by hiding the precious treasure in a napkin, or burying it in the earth."

Now we affirm that this condition is not once hinted at in the inspired oracles, and we challenge them to prove that it is. The prophecies of Scripture have never

been made to depend upon contingencies which can either accelerate or retard, much less frustrate, their accomplishment; and we as confidently maintain, that in the age of the church when the gifts of the Spirit were in perpetual operation, even at the period of their worst prostitution and abuse, the guilt of undervaluing these, her high prerogatives, cannot be in justice imputed to her. Men are never tired of the marvellous. Wonders never satiate. When real miracles vanished, pretended ones were set up to supply their place. This was one of the expedients to which the church of Rome resorted for the purpose of upholding her assumed domination.

The tendency of human nature has always been in this direction; when faith has been at its lowest ebb, credulity has risen in a full tide to bear away every vestige of rational evidence, and to obliterate all impressions derived from the moral power of the gospel. What then becomes of the assertion, that the guilt of the church, in repudiating her divine charter of miracles, is the cause of its abrogation, and the consequent impeachment of the truth of prophecy, and the truth of Christianity as founded upon it? We dismiss therefore the first proposition as altogether untenable, as equally opposed to Scripture and to fact, to reason and experience.

I might content myself by bringing the entire force of the whole argument to bear upon the second; and thus leave the pretensions of the church in Regent-square to be crushed by its overpowering weight: but the exposure of its ridiculous claims will tend to strengthen all that we have advanced, and will prove that, if miraculous powers are ever to be revived in a Christian community, they have no existence at the present moment, and that there never has been any thing less worthy of a divine character than the absurdities which are now attempted to be imposed upon the world, as the operations of the Spirit of God.

The miraculous power of recovering persons afflicted with long-standing maladies, which had defied the faculty, and

were deemed by human means hopeless and incurable, of which a few months since we heard so much, we now hear no more; this madness has worked itself out—or, at least, the light of reason has shamed it into retirement. Remarkable excitement produced remarkable effects—which have been fully accounted for on the principles of human nature—and there was no miracle in the case. The gift of tongues, however, is the prevailing wonder of the moment, and is one of the standing exhibitions, and one of the most powerful attractions, in a place of Christian worship, where multitudes assemble on the Sabbath-day to be amused or amazed. Here, too, we may affirm there is no miracle—there is no baptism of the Holy Ghost; it is either human imposture or Satanic influence, or a strange mixture of both. Whatever may be its pretensions, it differs, in all essential points, from that which it counterfeits—as it was displayed on the day of Pentecost, and subsequently exercised in the primitive churches. We have not been able to trace any thing like a resemblance between them but the name. In that they are identical, but, in every thing else, they are entirely dissimilar; indeed, the greatest possible contrariety exists between them; and this will appear if we consider that, in the case of the apostles and the primitive church, this supernatural endowment was imperatively required—it was necessary as a means of spreading the gospel, and of attesting its divine character; and in the then circumstances of Christianity we cannot conceive of any thing better adapted for these purposes than for illiterate and uneducated men, on whom was imposed the instant duty of making known a new religion to all the nations of mankind, to be able to speak the languages of the diversified tribes they were called upon to visit. In the ordinary way of acquiring the ability to understand and speak with fluency a very few tongues, they must have spent a great portion of their lives; and after having accomplished so severe a task, as they had strange facts and new doctrines to announce with no other testimony than they could themselves personally furnish,

they required credentials of a nature to satisfy their hearers that they were divinely commissioned. The fact of their illiteracy, combined with a power of speaking with vernacular ease and accuracy the different languages of the nations they had to address, would not only enable them to convey the truths they taught with clearness, but would clothe them with all the authority of heaven; these are the circumstances in which this miraculous endowment originated. Christianity was to be immediately and universally diffused; those who were chosen to accomplish this stupendous undertaking were persons advanced to maturity of years, without the knowledge of any language but their own; the qualification of which we are speaking was therefore indispensable to their engaging in it; and, without the gift of tongues, it would have been madness for them to have made the attempt. But can such circumstances be pleaded as a reason for conferring this distinction upon our modern apostles? Are they in the same situation with the first promulgators of the gospel? Do they stand in the same relation to the Saviour, as inspired teachers and witnesses of the truth? Do they stand in the same relation to the world? If, in circumstances bearing something like a distant analogy to those which occurred on the day of Pentecost, (as in the case of missionaries to the heathen,) this important gift has not in any instance been bestowed, can we imagine that it has been vouchsafed to individuals whose ministrations are confined to one country—and that the land of their fathers, with whose language they have been familiar from their earliest childhood. Of all the gifts which enriched the church in her infant state, the gift of tongues seems to be the least appropriate and the least necessary in modern times: thirty years ago it might have appeared desirable in Africa, or India, before our missionaries, by patient and persevering industry, had acquired the knowledge requisite to enable them to teach Christianity in those countries; but on the shores of Scotland, and in the metropolis of England, it would be an ostentatious

waste of power, conferring no benefit, and answering no adequate purpose. But we are confidently assured that the gift does exist, and that it is exercised with marvellous potency in these Christian lands, and among the most enlightened of our people. The loftiest pretensions are put forth, and the most pompous announcements made of another Pentecost; and one church, at least, is blessed with the extraordinary manifestation of the Spirit through the medium of sounds such as earth never heard, and no creature has yet been able to interpret. But, if it be indeed so, and what is pretended is really a divine operation, the harbinger of another age of miracles, and another baptism of the Holy Ghost, we ask with confidence, Where are the cloven tongues like as of fire? Where are the devout men of every nation under heaven, who not merely heard the apostles speaking in their own tongues, but heard them bearing testimony to the wonderful works of God? Where, in the modern church, are the effects of the tongues presumed to be spoken resembling those described by St. Paul as taking place in the church at Corinth? Where the unbeliever and the uninstructed, "coming in, is convinced of all, is judged of all, while the secrets of his heart are made manifest, and falling down on his face, he worships God, and reports that God is among them of a truth?" But, my brethren, it is in vain we look for corroborating circumstances to sustain the modern pretension! How is it possible that such circumstances can arise when the real apostolic gift and the present assumption of it differ so essentially in their character? In the primitive age "this gift consisted in the power of speaking one or more foreign languages without any previous application to the study of them. The languages thus made known by inspiration were languages spoken by the surrounding nations, over which Christianity was gradually extending itself;" this is evident from St. Paul's affirming that there were as many kinds of languages in the world as were spoken by the Corinthian converts. This is the interpretation, which,

according to Macknight, most correctly expresses the sense of the original text, in the fourteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, the tenth verse, which, in the common translation, is exceedingly obscure.

These languages were also understood by the individuals who uttered them—for the apostle expressly tells us that he who speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself, which he could not do by a mere volubility of sound to which he could attach no meaning. Again, they were understood by others; of course by the natives of those countries whose languages they were, and who might be present; and supernaturally by others who sustained the character of interpreters, and without whose presence and assistance, the possessors of the endowment were not allowed to exercise it. What analogy can we find to all this in the gift of tongues which we are, at the present time called upon to reverence as a communication from the Holy Spirit—which has justly been designated, by an ear-witness, "a wild effusion of unintelligible sounds, barely maintaining any likeness to a language in its form and cadence; totally unknown to any of the most inquiring travellers, or learned scholars, of our age; not spoken, as far as we have the means of inquiry, by any people under heaven; and, what is more extraordinary still, not even pretended to be understood by the very individuals who utter them. If these persons really understood the meaning of the sounds with which they astonish their auditors, they would be able to give a literal version of them; to distribute them into words and sentences; unless, indeed, they were extremely ignorant of their mother tongue, to translate them with something of their just force and expression. This is a task which no one among them has represented himself capable of accomplishing. As to what they call the interpretation, it rests entirely on the groundless and unsupported assumption, that the words which they speak in English during their paroxysms of excitement are to be received as conveying the meaning of the sounds which they have

previously emitted in their unintelligible jargon." Well may we observe, with an able writer, "This wild waste of human breath seems to be a work neither of goodness, nor mercy, nor of a redemptory, nor any other moral character whatever." Can it therefore be the inspiration of Heaven? Does it not want the essential quality of the ancient gift of which it is a miserable counterfeit? And thus we are brought to another conspicuous instance of discrepancy between the ancient and modern practice. The one was guided by apostolic regulation; the other sets all rules at defiance. "If one speak," says St. Paul, "in a foreign language, let it be two, or, at the most, three sentences, and separately, and let one interpret; but, if there be no interpreter, let him be silent in the church." The moderns treat this prohibition with contempt. From it we learn—what, indeed, is afterwards expressly repeated, that, "the spirit of the prophets was subject to the prophets." They were voluntary agents, and had the power of self-control. In the modern instances the speakers have no power to restrain themselves, they are mere passive instruments. This was evident on a recent occasion:—the leader of the band of fanatics announced on one Sabbath, that, in consequence of the disorder and dreadful confusion which had taken place in the congregation, the performance would not be continued in public, but would be confined to the private meetings of the church. On the next Sabbath, however, he was constrained to recall his inconsiderate prohibition, and to allow the madness to burst forth again in all its irrepressible extravagance. But the most striking contrast is visible in the prominence given to women in all the recent exhibitions. And it seems that this is not an accidental freak of fanaticism—for it is gravely affirmed by the oracle, that "Jehovah has seen meet to institute a new ordinance in favour of the female sex, in particular; even the ordinance of new tongues—in order that woman may be rescued from the cruel tyranny of man, and that man may be convinced, by

the most striking of all evidences, that she is his coequal, and coessential."

Now, my brethren, with all my respect for the character of women—and I will yield to no man in my efforts to raise her to her proper dignity in the scale of society—I confess I have no wish to invest a wife or a daughter with the unfeminine distinction of becoming a Pythoness or a Sybil. The proper sphere of woman is in the bosom of her family—in the silent and unostentatious discharge of her domestic duties. The Halls, the Cardales, and the Campbells, may be very estimable persons—but I like not their prophesying—I am scandalized when I see the veil of female modesty violently thrown aside, to exhibit the bold front of the spiritual actress—performing a part in public which is totally incompatible with the retiring and sensitive delicacy which is woman's loveliest charm and her best defence. In this I have the sanction of apostolic authority in reference to the very subject now under discussion. "Let your women," says St. Paul, "keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law, and if they will learn any thing let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." How can our female divines, and their confessors, justify their palpable and direct hostility to this express prohibition of the holy Scripture? Is this passage blotted out from their Bible?—Or do they imagine that their impulses are of higher authority than the peremptory dictates of God's written word?

We have already observed that *the supernatural gifts which distinguished the earliest age of Christianity were imparted for the purpose of diffusing its facts and doctrines throughout the world; and for the edification of the church, by orally supplying what was then deficient in the revelation which was about to be completed.* Now, it is very evident that neither of these objects can be promoted by the incomprehensible jargon at present in vogue.

The new apostles prefer remaining at home to exposing themselves to the toils and perils of a foreign mission. Besides, they would be as unintelligible abroad as in their own country: and, as to the edification of their fellow Christians, their interpretation of their own rhapsody of sounds throws no light upon holy Scripture—has no tendency to inform the judgment, or to warm the heart. Instead of their affording any evidence of their being guided by the Spirit of wisdom and knowledge, they appear to be singularly deficient in every quality which belongs to enlightened teachers of Christianity. “As far as I heard,” says a competent witness, “on the only occasion that I could ever induce myself to witness these strange and repulsive scenes” —instead of observing any proof that a divine illumination had indeed “beamed upon their minds, the contrary was so decidedly the case that, when they spoke intelligibly, the matter of the speech was no more than any child, of a common charity-school, might very easily have supplied. It consisted of a few sentences of exhortation to repentance, repeated over and over again with a poverty of expression, and a paucity of ideas, which I was astonished to find in connexion with so much enthusiastic excitement.”\*

But, as if abandoning the idea of instructing by the exercise of these extraordinary manifestations, they tell us they are a sign that the church to which they belong is under the immediate direction of the Holy Spirit; and that the doctrines taught by its pastor are the infallible truths of God. A strange and arrogant—I had almost said an impious—assumption. The sign, and the matter of its attestation, are alike contrary to all that we have ever learnt of Christianity in the New Testament.

The tongues spoken by apostles and evangelists in the primitive age, as we have already seen, were real languages, intelligible and capable of a literal translation—sentence by sentence. They were infallible indications of a miracu-

lous power; and then they were never employed but in making known and impressing on those that heard them that divine doctrine of which St. Paul says, “If I, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel, let him be accursed.”

Now, in the present instance, as is the sign so is the doctrine. And, indeed, ever since the completion of the Scriptures, and the consequent disappearance of miracles, the assumption of supernatural gifts has usually been attended with some capital error—some grievous departure from the fundamental truths of the gospel. So constantly has this happened, that, when we hear the cry of miracles, we may be almost certain that some new or some revived heresy is about to cloud with its pestilential vapours the horizon of the church. Thus the Almighty wisely permits extravagance to neutralize falsehood—and makes the abettors of heretical opinions to refute themselves.

The unknown tongues of the nineteenth century (a mere gibberish of sounds) are employed in confirmation of the most heterogeneous errors. The heresies of every age are brought into a strange alliance—and one moment we are astounded with assertions of the sinful humanity of the immaculate Son of God—the next we are startled with the paradox of universal pardon, and restricted salvation; and, as we proceed, we find ourselves within the precincts of a new Apocalypse, but unsustained by inspiration. The personal appearance of the Being who now fills the throne, and governs the affairs of the universe, again upon earth—and reigning among men in his human capacity for a thousand years—his wars and conquests, and the wondrous events which are to happen during this period, and which give to his history the air of a terrible romance—are all made to pass under our view; his near approach is announced—the tongue, the awful tongue, roaring like a cataract, is followed by unearthly sounds of something that is intelligible, proclaiming in the hearing of affrighted multitudes, “O, Britain, *thou anointed of*

\* Harness's Sermon.

*the Lord, thy destruction is at hand; fear not ye, people of God.*" But enough of extravagance and blasphemy. That it is delusion, and not deliberate imposture, among some of its actors I am willing to believe. If any thing I have said should appear to my hearers harsh and uncharitable, let them remember that, while we pity the mistaken votaries of error, we owe no tenderness to their aberrations. Let it also be recollected that the sober and rational portion of the Christian community, who entertain the conviction that the Spirit of God is not chargeable with any of the absurdities which have been made to pass under his sanction, are unceremoniously accused of committing the unpardonable sin—the sin against the Holy Ghost. In our own defence, therefore, we are called upon to repel so ungenerous an imputation. We fear that "the great danger is of blaspheming the Spirit of the Lord by ascribing to his holy and wise agency those appearances which may have had their origin in human device, or in Satanic delusion." What the end of all this extravagance will be it is not difficult to conceive. We are guided to the conclusion that it will be short-lived by the lessons so awfully read to us in the history of similar assumptions. Pretensions were made to this very gift of tongues by a few deluded fanatics not a century ago; but it passed away, and its authors fell into deserved contempt. High excitement, and fancied possession of miraculous endowments, have often been united with the belief of the immediate coming of the Son of God in personal majesty: but "Christendom has proved again and again, that this transcendental confidence may exist in vain. Its failure in the hands of the unfortunate persons whom it has so frequently inspired and betrayed seems destined to be thrown away as an example. Age after age, an irrepressible ardour hurries on sanguine spirits to grasp at the immediate miraculous reward of an undoubting zeal, in their own way, and upon their own terms. In spite of the shipwreck of their predecessors on the selfsame adventure, they dread no rocks for their own vessel, and

strike on the reef whilst insisting loudly that God will not permit them to be deceived."\*

Great stress has been laid upon the blameless lives and exemplary deportment of those who have been most conspicuous in this work of delusion; but good men are not infallible. They may be devout in their spirit, but grievously erratic in their judgment. We are to receive doctrines, and to weigh pretensions, on other grounds; the apostle supposes that an angel from heaven might preach another gospel; but he tells us that his superior nature, and lofty descent, are to have no influence in our deciding upon his communications. These are to be determined by that gospel which God has already confirmed by miracles, and which was preached to mankind by his incarnate Son.

And as to the question of personal character, we should do well to remember that the holiest men that ever lived were the apostles of Christ—that the fathers of the church were most exemplary and devout—and that there are innumerable Christians in our own times, of the purest conduct, and the most ardent zeal—the liveliest faith, and the most expansive charity—who adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things—who yet regard with dismay and horror the fanaticism which we all deplore. The most dangerous enemies of the church are those who propagate heresies which she condemns, but whose consistency of life she cannot impugn.

In conclusion, my brethren, let us value as we ought the glorious inheritance which remains to us. Instead of seeking a feverish excitement, and preternatural wonders, let us cleave to the faith, the hope, and charity, which are to abide with us for ever. These are gifts of divine bestowment; and, if we attain to these, we are qualified to serve God in all well pleasing, and to promote the best interests of our fellow men. Faith, hope, and charity, shining in the spirit and pursuits of all real Christians, will cause a second paradise to bloom around them—will open heaven to their

\* Edinburgh Review.

view—will surround them with the harmonies of immortality; the tabernacle of God will then be with men, and the whole earth shall be filled with his glory. Amen.

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UNCERTAINTY OF HUMAN EXPECTATIONS.

DARK and uncertain is the state of being in which we now exist. Human life is not formed to answer those high expectations, which, in the era of youth and imagination, we are apt to entertain. When we first set out in life, we bid defiance to the evil day; we indulge in dreams and visions of romantic bliss, and fondly lay the scene of perfect and uninterrupted happiness for the time to come. But experience soon undeceives us: we awake and find that it was but a dream. We make but a few steps in life without finding the world to be a turbulent scene; we soon experience the changes that await us, and feel the thorns of the wilderness wherein we dwell. Our hopes are frequently blasted in the bud, our designs are defeated in the very moment of expectation, and we meet with sorrow, and vexation, and disappointment, on all hands. There are lives besides our own in which we are deeply interested; lives in which our happiness is placed, and on which our hopes depend. Just when we have laid a plan of happy life; when, after the experience of years, we have found out a few chosen friends, and have begun to enjoy that little circle in which we would

wish to live and to die, an unexpected stroke disappoints our hopes, and lays all our schemes in the dust. When, after much labour and care, we have reared the goodly structure; when we have fenced it, as we fondly imagine, from every storm that blows, and indulge the pleasing hope that it will always endure, an invisible hand interposes, and overturns it from the foundation. Son of prosperity! thou now lookest forth from thy high tower; thou now gloriest in thine excellence; thou sayest, that thy mountain stands strong, and that thou art firm as the cedar of Lebanon; but stand in awe. Before the mighty God of Jacob, and by the blast of the breath of his nostrils, the mountain hath been overturned, and the cedar of Lebanon hath fallen like the leaf before the tempest. At this very moment of time the wheel is in motion that reverses the lot of men, that brings the prosperous to the dust, and lays the mighty low. Now, O man, thou rejoicest in thy strength; but know that for thee the bed of languishing, the bed of death will be spread. Thou now removest from thee the evil day, and sayest in thy heart, thou shalt never see sorrow; but remember the changes of this mortal life. The calmest and the stillest hour precedes the whirlwind and the earthquake; the monarch hath drawn the chariot of state in which he was wont to ride in triumph; and the greatest who ever awed the world have moralized at the turn of the wheel.—*Logan.*





