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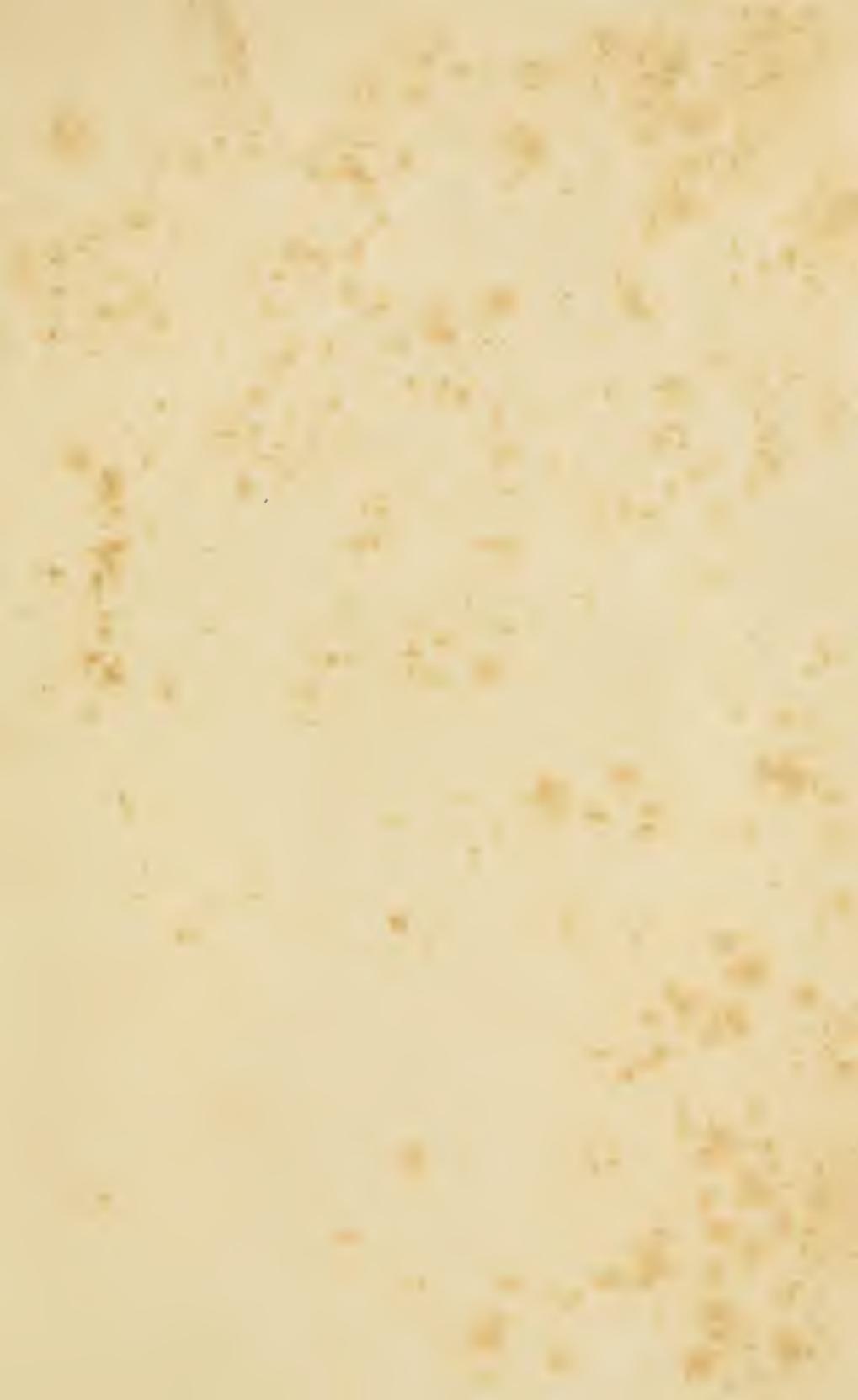
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Sermons.





Edward N. Kirk.

DISCOURSES, Doctrinal and Practical.

BY

EDWARD N. KIRK, D.D.

BOSTON.

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I.

GOD'S LOVE TO MAN.

"We love him because he first loved us."—1 John 4: 19.

To many it seems that perfect amiableness and goodness in our Creator requires him to look with entire approbation and indulgence upon them, without regard to the principles upon which they are acting; whether holy or unholy. And yet some of this very class of persons, when brought to a more intimate acquaintance with themselves, and to a higher conception of what they ought to be, see that a holy God must hate them; and, if he hates them, they cannot imagine that he loves them at the same time. Here are the two extremes of error; one of which, probably, mankind generally regard as truth.

It is to one of these errors your attention is now called. I will, therefore, assume here that God abhors the natural character of man, because it is selfish and ungodly. As Paul said to the converted Ephesians, so he would say, under divine inspiration, to all good men, "Ye were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Paul himself, so faithful

a servant of Christ, so beloved of God, was once a persecutor, a fierce bigot, filled with self-righteousness and hatred of good men. If any of us is approved of God, it is not because we were naturally so good that a holy Creator must approve of us. On the contrary, our hearts and our lives were wholly offensive to him. Leaving, then, that erroneous extreme, I propose to take up the other, into which they fall who begin to know their true character in the sight of God, and then to confound his hatred of their character with an indifference to their happiness.

And, as there is so much want of a clear discrimination on this subject, I must begin with proving that

I. GOD CAN HATE AND LOVE THE SAME PERSON AT THE SAME MOMENT.—It is shown in

1. *The very nature of benevolence.* — What is a good man? Try him by a case of this kind. He knows a man who is addicted to intemperance; and who, in his paroxysms, abuses his family. How does this good man regard the case? He abhors the drunkard's character and conduct; yet he loves and pities the man. If the man can be reclaimed, and made a good man, he will rejoice; nay, he will do whatever he can consistently do to bring it about. Now, he would not be a good man if he had not both these classes of feelings in the case. And thus God exhibits himself to us as a holy God. He abhors all our sins; he calls our hearts “deceitful, and desperately wicked.” He threatens us with eternal destruction; and yet, while we were still enemies, he gave his Son to die for us. Look, then, at the

2. *Scriptural representation of God's feelings towards the children of men.* — Notice first the case of those who murdered Christ. None can doubt that they were most hateful to God. And yet the dying Son, who fully represented his Father's feelings, regarded them as deserving the wrath of God at the same time he prayed for their forgiveness. And was that prayer ineffectual? No; for, on the day of Pentecost, within less than a fortnight after the murderous deed was done, a servant of Christ is commissioned to go and charge upon them their crime; not to condemn them, but to bring them to repentance. And then the Holy Spirit descends to bring them to exercise repentance; and some of them, at least, are forgiven.

Take, too, the case of Saul, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the flock of Christ. Surely, the good Shepherd must abhor his blood-thirsty cruelty. And yet he meets him in mercy, to bring him to a better mind.

Then look abroad upon a world lying in wickedness, sometimes as great as that which brought the deluge of water on the world, or that of fire on Sodom. But he sendeth his rain upon the thankful and the unthankful. What does every gentle drop proclaim, as it falls upon the field of the ungodly man? Hear it tell its own story: "I come to thee, O, son of man, from thy heavenly Father. He is grieved at thy ingratitude; but he sent me to fall upon thy field, and bless it. I came, one of an innumerable band, to make thy grass and corn grow for thy nourishment. He loves thee, while thou art grieving him. It was not wrath; it was not

the desire to keep up a cold, mechanical regularity of seasons that induced him to send me. It was love; love to his enemy, whom he would fain make a friend."

Having, then, clearly settled it in our minds that God may love and hate us at the same time, let us proceed to notice that

II. GOD DOES LOVE ALL MEN.—It is seen in

1. *The very act of creation.*—We can imagine nothing but a generous, disinterested desire of sharing with other beings the happiness of existence, that induced Him to create what is to our apprehension an infinite universe of happy creatures, possessed of merely animal sensibilities. No one can think of them for a moment, and of the fact that his will alone gave them existence, without being deeply impressed by it as a manifestation of the pure and generous disposition of their Creator. He surely is in no way dependent on any or all of them. Nothing but a spirit of the most disinterested and gentle kindness would, for instance, have colonized every leaf of every shrub in the field, and of every tree in the vast forest, with an empire of living creatures, all revelling in existence. Air, water, earth, is full of life; happy, beautiful life. The sum of their capacities for enjoyment is beyond all human powers of calculation. And he who endowed his creatures with so much ability to enjoy, surely delights in their happiness.

All this, however, is only a partial display of creative power and of divine goodness; for that reserved its great exercise and manifestation, until earth had become a paradise.

God loves the plants, and shows it by caring and providing for their well-being. He loves the birds, the beasts, and the creeping thing. But none of them wears his paternal image ; none is called his son. The fulness of divine love was reserved to express itself in the formation of a creature that should link all creation together, and all creation to God himself.

What endowments has he bestowed on man ! He has given him a material organism, the crowned head of all other material structures ; an animal system placed in the throne of the animal universe ; a soul like the angels', like God ! Fellow-men, love gave us this frame, this soul, this position, this mysterious sympathy with matter and mind, with the animal and the angelic race ; linked us by such ties at once to brutes, seraphs, God, earth, heaven, space, suns, planets, time, and eternity. All that lies locked up within these souls, to be unfolded in an endless duration, to expand under the growing splendors of divine tuition, of personal activity, of divine illuminations, manifestations, creations, and dispensations ; amid hierarchies, princes of heaven, celestial conferences, mighty enterprises, vast researches, growing joys, enhancing treasures of thought and memory and affection ; for ever, and ever, and ever, without decay, without alloy, without interruption, without cessation ; this, brethren, this love gave us ! But we need not now carry the enumeration any further. Every human being, whatever his outward lot, may see within himself this pledge of his Creator's love to himself and to others ; the countless arrangements and endow-

ments that look to man's expansion, progress, and ultimate perfection, are so many demonstrations that "he first loved us," even before we were capable of loving him. We may see that man as man, as a race, is the object of a high degree of his Creator's regard.

And then each member of the race may bring it home to his own heart, and realize in himself the evidences that he is personally the object of that love. It would be a mockery, were it general, and not special. "He loves me," may every one say — should every one say. And when we pass from our general endowments as rational, moral, social beings, to the particular histories of our individual lives, we find overwhelming evidence that God's goodness is unwearied, inexhaustible, gentle, minute, and personal. There is an eye that has never slumbered since we had a being; and its tender regard has never passed away from either of us; there is a hand that has nurtured, and guided, and guarded us; there is a heart that has loved us with a divine goodness and compassion.

It is further seen in

2. *Forming a moral government for man.*—Had he not regarded our welfare, he would not have placed us under the checks and balances and controlling power of government. But the closest study of our mental constitution as individuals, and of our wants as social beings, with an examination of God's moral government, will reveal his great regard for our individual welfare, and for the happiness of our race. And the laws under which he has placed us all

aim at our personal perfection, and the highest degree and form of happiness of which we are capable.

But the crowning proof of God's love

3. *Is in Christ and redemption.*—“God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” What was it but a desire to promote our welfare that led to all this arrangement,—this condescension, patience, ignominy, suffering, and death.

Pause, fellow-sinner, fellow-man, before that wonderful being that you find now in the manger, now on the cross; follow his wonderful footsteps; dwell on his words; hear his prayers; gaze on his tears, nay, on his flowing blood, until you fully and firmly believe, never to doubt it, or forget that God loves us when we do not love him. Then follow out all the history of his mission, tracing it down to this moment when you are sitting here, feeling the power of all those influences by which he is urging you to repentance, and drawing you to himself.

What, then, should be the effect of this great fact, in our experience?

III. EVERY HUMAN BEING SHOULD LOVE HIM.

This is not the place to urge his claims to our benevolence, because that claim is founded on his capacity for happiness. Benevolence is wishing well to another; wishing the best; and so wishing as to make any personal sacrifice for the greater

good of others. We ought to wish well to the least insect that creeps. And so we should ascend the scale of being, esteeming the happiness of each as more and more important, until we reach the eternal throne. And the blessedness of him who occupies it should be the object of our supreme desire.

But the passage we are considering looks in other directions. Observing God's benevolent regard to us, it declares that good men are led by that to love God. In other words, the benevolence of God claims our admiration, complacency, and gratitude. I use these terms in their highest and most reverential sense, to express the most reverential delight in God, as he exhibits this infinitely amiable character, as well as the profoundest feeling of indebtedness.

It will be found, on reflection, that, however these sentiments may be promoted by a general contemplation of God's benevolence to all men, it is in regarding ourselves as its objects that we get peculiar impressions, and a peculiar impulse to love him.

It is in ourselves we discover most fully the disparity between God and a creature. There is that in consciousness which cannot be in observation. In one's self one discovers most fully the ignorance, the feebleness of a creature; how poor, how dependent, how unable to return anything to God but its poor love. And it is in that profounder study of our littleness, that we discover this great fact. God has created beings who, while they partake of his own spiritual nature, and can see in themselves in miniature his spiritual faculties and susceptibilities, at the same time are directly contrasted

with him in feebleness and absolute dependence. And when this point shall come to be fully understood by men, then the great typical meaning of the conjugal relation will be understood, and the tenderness, as well as awful force, of those passages which compare all sin toward God to conjugal infidelity, will be seen.

We are not companions fit to entertain a being of infinite intelligence. He can derive no benefit from us. Nothing, then, but a most pure and disinterested benevolence, can induce him to take so much interest in a poor, ignorant, feeble creature, like me. My wants drive me to him; but his fulness draws him to me. He loves to communicate, and he has therefore created me capable of appreciating my wants and his fulness, my insignificance and his greatness. I can know my dependence, and I can appreciate his goodness, as no other kind of creature around me, but man, can do. He wanted to have a heart like mine to receive his blessings and appreciate his kindness. He made me with vast interests and responsibilities; enough to crush me, if I go alone to my conflicts and my toils. But he wants me to lean on him; to make his fulness the correlative of my poverty, his power the complement of my weakness, his wisdom the complement of my ignorance. O, wonderful goodness! And have I so failed to understand and appreciate it? Forgive me, Father! Yes, I am to become disinterested in my love. But I get the first lesson by going apart from men to study God's wondrous love to me. It is wonderful to me that he loves other men; but most wonderful that he loves me. And

when I go forth, thus instructed and impressed, from this personal communion, to contemplate his love to all my fellow-men, then my admiration grows and expands, and my heart is drawn out to love men, as my Father and their Father loves them. I turn to the Gospel, and there I see divine goodness taking on the robes of humanity, tabernacling among us, espousing our race, becoming “bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh.” Here love “puts on its divinest form.” Once it appeared in creating power, calling into being shining suns, and floating worlds, and glorious angels, and a universe of hymning voices. Then it appeared in the gentleness of its paternal care, watching over all this happy family ; clothing all, feeding all, teaching all, blessing all. But now it appears in a new form — to redeem a lost race ! Here it comes forth with a condescension that astounds the hierarchies of heaven, and stirs the deepest envy of all the malignant enemies of God. His name is “Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” And yet, at the same time, he is born to one of our race, as a son ! And every child of Adam may say, he became incarnate for me. And when he had become man, then he still humbled himself. He went about doing good. Love, love is in every look, every word, every step, every action. I hear him comforting the afflicted, warning the wicked, calling the dead to life. I see him stop at the cry of a blind beggar ; I see gathering around him the miserable, seeking sympathy and relief, and grateful beneficiaries praising his goodness. He has malignant enemies seeking his life. But it is not for himself he

cares. His body-guard is made up of lepers, cripples, blind men, penitent sinners, broken-hearted mothers. O, Prince of Peace ! who can behold thy wondrous march through a world over which heroes have strutted in their pride and cruelty, and not be filled with admiration !

And not only condescension and pity marked this manifestation of the Deity, but also self-sacrifice. Forbearance and gentleness toward the imperfections and errors of his disciples fill the soul with wonder. But in his laboriousness, his endurance of every form of evil, consummated by bearing our sins in his own body on the tree ; going like a sheep, silent to the shearing, and like a lamb, dumb to the slaughter ; there we see love. He bore reproach, insult, cruelty, and mockery, without hatred or revenge, and then he took from the Father's hand the cup that held the curse ; and he drank it for us !

We love him because he first loved us. He went to the depth of the abyss. He could go no lower. He paid the full debt. He conquered the last foe ; he opened the remotest prison-door. He made salvation possible for all. Then he arose, because the work of love could now be completed in heaven. I know not where that is, relatively to space. Wherever he is, it is ; and there he is interceding, and in his place he sends another paraclête or helper.

“Herein is love ; not that we loved God, but that he loved us.” And, to crown the proof of his love, he seeks ours in return. That completes the evidence of his regard for us, and binds us to love him in return. He requires us both to

be grateful for his kindness, and to enter into fellowship and communion with him ; and, as children, to reciprocate God's love. This is, in part, what our Saviour intended in the declaration, " Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." We are not to become less loving, less confiding, as we grow older, but more so. And as a growing knowledge of men makes complacency and confidence in them more difficult, we must exercise them the more fully on God. " Abba, Father," is the lesson, the great lesson, that lies at the starting-place of wisdom. We ought to love him as a savior. He has redeemed us by taking to himself our nature, and dying in our stead. To him our souls should go forth, in the full strength of their affections. Love him as a pardoning God. It is he that " blotteth out all thine iniquities." The moment you repent, lying at his feet, no longer desiring to disobey, but to obey and love him, he will accept you, and would have you love him as a pardoning God. You see how Christ lived with his disciples when he was on earth. You see how God dealt with Moses and Abraham. You see what tenderness was in John's love ; what ardor in Peter's ; what energy in Paul's. These are your models and your encouragement.

This subject explains to us the reasons of the strange fact, that men doubt whether God loves them. — At the first glance it would seem as if every human being would rather believe without evidence that God loves him, than deny it against evidence. But it is not so ; and the reason of it can be shown. In certain aspects it is very agreeable

to believe that God loves us; but the heart catches a glimpse of certain consequences that make it more horrible to believe that God loves us, than to believe that he is indifferent to us, or even that he cruelly hates us.

It is the very essence of impenitence to be self-complacent, satisfied with self. So long as the impenitent heart, therefore, can confound the benevolence of God with his complacency, it will believe in his love to us, for that flatters our pride. If God loves me, then I am lovely, is its false reasoning. The answer is, no; he may love and hate you at the same time, as you would an ungrateful child; but, when the distinction becomes clear, the effect is tremendous. God's love is then seen to be only benevolence toward them, and to consist with contempt for their character. It is only pity, which a proud heart spurns. This distinction makes their character appear in all its vileness. And it furnishes no security that God will ever make them happy; much as he may desire it. The same obstacle that prevents their being made holy will forever prevent their being made happy. No man can bear the sight of his own heart as refusing to love an infinitely amiable being. It is a horrible thing to disobey him who loves us so. They must, therefore, take one of three courses: repent and love him, or believe they do love him, or believe he does not love them. To see him loving them strips the soul of every excuse and plea for not loving him. Hence come the efforts to think of God as at a great distance, as indifferent, even cruel. This is all a natural consequence of impenitence; for a man gladly hears and readily

believes evil reports concerning one whom he is conscious of injuring. But this leads me to remark again that,

It is as wicked and inexcusable to doubt God's benevolence to the impenitent as it is to believe his complacency to them. — Satan plays a sad game with the human heart here; now holding it in the delusion that God is not angry with it; then, as soon as God's anger is discerned, his benevolence is doubted. And thus we find the kindness of God so confounded in men's minds with his complacency, that while they believe in his benevolence it injures them, because they think it is complacency; and when they begin to doubt his complacency, and need the belief of his kindness, then that is swept away in the same torrent with their false security. But it is wicked, against all that God has done to show his kindness, still to doubt it. Unbelief is never excused by God.

It is also wicked and inexcusable to set God's benevolence against his justice and veracity. — Many do. God has declared he will punish the wicked after death, and with everlasting punishment. Against this men set his goodness. If they would so believe his goodness as to repent and serve him, it would be legitimate. But who can measure the wickedness of remaining impenitent against that goodness, and then reasoning from it to comfort the soul in rebellion?

It is also wicked and inexcusable not to love God. — There is no point our great adversary labors more to secure, than to prevent our seeing God's amiableness, kindness, beneficence, and favors to us; the consequent claims he has on

us, the blessedness of loving him, the falseness of any other happiness ; the utter wickedness, inexcusableness, and desperateness, of refusing to love him. Sometimes our unbelief pleads the invisibility and silence of God. "Why does he not come here now ?" But he is here now. Sometimes he is said to be "unapproachable." This is not true. Or, he is thought to be "indifferent to us ;" but without reason. Or, it is said, "I cannot love him." This is equally untrue, as urged in excuse. If an ungrateful child tells you he cannot love you, his father, you do not admit his plea. You must, then, repent of not loving God. Repent of that conflict which your wickedness causes in his heart between benevolence and holiness ; which finds its utterance in this affecting appeal : "How shall I give thee up ?"

A refusal to believe that God loves us is the unbelief which destroys the soul. — "He that believeth not shall be damned." It involves a vindication of all former sins ; a love of the sinful state ; and a purpose to persevere in it. It is a distinct, unvaried refusal to accept all the wonderful provision of divine mercy for our restoration to holiness ; always concealing its deformity from the eye of the conscience, by some vain plea or excuse. Unbelief justifies the soul's impenitence, virtually declaring, in unspoken words, that "the Lord our God is not amiable ; that he is a great abstraction, out of the range of man's sympathy." It prevents repentance for sinning against him, by representing him as worthy of hatred. And to effect this, it accumulates prejudices against him. This is its language : "Is not there a great deal of evil in the world which God would prevent if he were as amiable as

I am? Would he not more fully gratify my wishes if he were good? My lot is very hard. I have tried to repent, and I have prayed, and done all that I could, but in vain.” Unbelief keeps the heart out of the range of those views of God’s truth and love, which would melt it in penitential sorrow at a Saviour’s feet. Whose heart can lie unmoved beneath the beams that stream so gently, but so powerfully, from the mysterious cross, which holds that mysterious sufferer?

Unbelief cherishes opposition to the divine mercy. For the method of that mercy is, to overwhelm us with a sense of our wickedness; to draw us to God by a sense of our absolute dependence and unworthiness. His goodness requires severe methods with our strange malady. But these an unbelieving heart hates and refuses. Unbelief prevents our loving God, by hiding from us the evidence of his love to us. And thus it fortifies itself; for, the instant we believe just what is true in the case, we must turn and flee to his bosom as an altar of mercy, as our hiding-place from the tempest, as our eternal rest. And thus it prevents God from forgiving us, and from having complacency in us. Hear, ye children of men: God, your heavenly father, so good, so amiable, so abounding in mercy, can never delight in you until you come to him as sinners, depraved, guilty, lost, and helpless, and begin to trust him as the Saviour of sinners. Dread, therefore, and abandon that unbelief which now binds you as a chain to your present dreary position of alienation; for you are “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.”

II.

THE PRIMITIVE GLORY OF CHRIST.

"And now, O Father! glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." — John 17: 5.

If you had seen and heard the Son of God offering this prayer, what would have been your thoughts and emotions? Would it have surprised you to hear words which had more than an earthly meaning? The outpouring of his soul in communing with his heavenly Father must contain mysteries, if it correspond with his origin, his life, and his mission.

Some persons have tried to bring down the experience of Christ to that of a mere man. But, if they should succeed in this, then language would cease to be of any value; and honesty could not be one of his virtues, for he laid claim to an experience that neither men nor angels have. If any one believes that Christ, in using the expressions before us, had no other consciousness than that of man, they must abandon the Bible. This utterance is among the wonders of redemption. It is neither that of man, angel, or God; but of God-man. If he were only man, he could not say that he had a glory with the Father before any creature had an exist-

ence ; nor could any angel say it — not the loftiest which Omnipotency ever made. If he were only divine, he could not utter a prayer which a man could use as his own ; and yet it was undoubtedly from human lips this prayer proceeded.

The passage is one of those which bring to our view the three stages of Christ's existence : his estate of glory, his estate of humiliation, and his estate of glory resumed. We consider

I. HIS PRIMITIVE ESTATE.— His prayer distinctly mentions a glorious condition once enjoyed ; and refers it to a period before creation had taken place, when no being but God existed. Some say God was alone from all eternity ; and, of course, in that sense, solitary. Now, when they speak of the embarrassment of contemplating God in a plurality of persons, they speak only of their own experience ; and urge that as a reason why the doctrine of plurality of persons in the Godhead should be discarded. But we can present an embarrassment from our feelings equally great. If we must compare God with ourselves, then we cannot separate from their view of his unity an awful solitude, a loneliness which is to us horrible. If it is replied, You must not compare the Deity with us in his unity.— Precisely ; that is our view. We judge him by his own description, and not by our consciousness. The Bible represents three beings as God. They are called by different names, as distinguished from each other ; but all are the one God. Christ meets our feelings in this matter when he utters, in this wonderful

prayer, the expression to his Father, "For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." Glory is a term of wide extent. It may refer either to that which strikes the eye of a spectator as admirable, or to that which would, if it were seen. Both are included here. We are now transported to a period full of mystery to the human understanding; and every description of what existed then must be mysterious. You say, you will not believe the Trinity, because it is mysterious. Come, then, let us contemplate God in his unity, before creation, before time. Where are you now, with your feeble understanding? Does no mystery meet you? Yes; all is mysterious; that is, unlike the objects of our ordinary contemplation. We have, in our own intellectual and moral being, a basis on which to raise the conception of Deity; but we are mistaken, if we think it is very broad or very deep. And we shall never know God, if we make our preconceptions the standard to try his teachings.

Brethren, the Deity was not revealed to gratify our curiosity, nor to increase our pride of intellect; but to bring us into relations of affection, submission, and communion, with him.

Some say he existed from all eternity, in absolute unity, both of essence, consciousness, and affection. But the Scriptures will not bear that out. Jesus Christ lays claim to a participation in that existence, consciousness, and affection, which he here calls glory. And it is associated, or social glory; or a glory shared by one that could say I, with one to

whom he could say, Thou. “In the beginning the Word was with God, and the Word was God;” “the glory I had with thee.” This is the glory which existed before any creature existed to behold it. But, when intelligent creatures came on the stage, they began to study it; and they will forever increase their adoration of this uncreated, independent, and infinite Divine excellence.

But, more specifically :

1. *The primitive state of Christ was that of unity in essence with the Father.* — There is but one God. On this the Father insists — the Son insists. The person of the Son is as really in that essence, as the person of the Father. You say you do not understand it. I am not explaining it to your understanding. I am showing you what Christ has deemed it important for us to know, with all the obscurity that is inherent in it.

2. *That unity admits of a distinct personality from that of the Father.* — The person called the Son, has all of Godhead that the person called the Father, has. But he is not the Father.

3. *He had the same glory as the Father.* — Now we emerge into a little clearer region. That is; all is obscure, though glorious, previous to the act of creation; but, when that begins, we begin to see, at least, less obscurely. It is often affirmed in the Scriptures that the Father is invisible; that he is made known only by the Son. Hence this person of the Godhead is called the Word, since a word brings to our apprehension a thought, an action, a quality of the soul that

before was utterly concealed from us. The creating person of the Godhead is the Son. "By him everything was made that was made." We know not, then, a glorious attribute in the Godhead that is not manifested in creating and governing the universe. The Son appears the Creator, bringing out his own perfections, and those of the Father, in creation. Then comes redemption; and then, under redemption, comes the election of the Jewish race; and then the higher election of the true church of that and every period.

Here is, then, glory which the Son of God had before the world was; and we now are called to see him lay it aside.

II. THE HUMILIATED STATE IS NOW BEFORE US.—You will recall, that Jesus, the Son of Mary, was now engaged in prayer to the being whom he calls Father. You will recollect that he addresses him in a way that we know would be blasphemy in us. How, for instance, could any of us ask the Father to glorify us with a glory which we had with him before the world was? He speaks of a glory not now possessed.

1. *What, then, was his humiliated state?*—It was the presentation to the world of the infinite majesty of his Godhead veiled in a human person; and of that perfect and glorious manhood in the lowest possible form compatible with holiness. "The Word was made flesh." The infinite entered the finite; the invisible took the visible form of man. In so doing, he assumed a position inferior to both the Father and the angels. So we are told that he who "thought it not robbery to be equal with God" (the Father) "was made in the

likeness of man." The first consequence was, that, although he came to his own; the very people who had known him as their Creator, by the writings of Moses,—the very people whom he had chosen, nurtured, instructed, redeemed, and blessed above all people,—when he came, they would not recognize his Godhead. The glory he had with the Father, before the world was, they denied to him. Here was the Jehovah who appeared to Abraham, and made promise of all the glory Israel should possess; here was the Jehovah who appeared to Moses in the burning bush, in Egypt, at the Red Sea, in the wilderness; but they knew him not. They said, "It is the carpenter's son;" and, "he blasphemeth," because he saith he is the Son of God. The glory he had before creation, and the glory of all the history of creation, providence, and redemption, was hidden to unbelieving eyes. Man says, in unbelief, if the eternal Son of God stoops to save us by appearing in our very nature, we will despise him; we have a philosophy that will affirm the intrinsic impossibility of the thing. And, if we give him credit for great excellence as a man, it will be by a tacit compromise that he is a liar; not really meaning what he affirmed about his existence before his birth. Or, if some of us cannot go so far as that, we will allow him to be a kind of angel incarnate. Thus Judaism, Mohammedism, Arianism, Socinianism, Unitarianism, and Rationalism, are all so many organized systems of contempt toward Christ; the most severe contempt being constructively found in extolling him as a Saviour, while his high and glorious pretensions are denied; thus, both making him only a

creature, and the most blasphemous of impostors. There is no middle ground on this subject. Nothing ever could be more preposterous than the attempt to shade off the distinction between acknowledging and denying Christ's Godhead. But to this he knowingly submitted ; and thus abased himself as God, below the Father and the angels. As man, too, he took a low place. It was man in his moral perfection, he took for his inferior nature ; but it was man in an exterior debased in the eye of unbelief. He was born as a sinner, though not a sinner. His mother was a sinner, with us all. She was poor and obscure ; her royal lineage was a thing forgotten ; the blood of kings was in her veins, but she was an obscure village-maiden. Her nation was then at its lowest ebb ; and the time had come when there was no worldly honor in being a Jew. He was born in a stable, or cave, because the inn was full of guests esteemed superior to his parents. His infancy was obscure as the obscurerest of his followers ever lead. He entered upon his manhood, to be subjected to temptation ; to live apart from all high alliances ; to be too poor to buy the lodging of a night ; to be the servant of everybody ; to have his almighty skill commanded by beggars, cripples, lepers, and lunatics. He went forth a teacher, to have his instructions despised and rejected. "This is the stone the builders rejected." His death was brought on by betrayal, perjury, mob-power, tyranny ; with the highest display of ingratitude, contempt, hatred, oppression, and cruelty. He, on whom death had no claim, tasted death, and lay in the grave. As God-man he was thus abased below himself, below man,

below the worst of men ; for they gave the gallows to him, in preference to a seditious murderer ; and judged him fit to occupy the place of eminence between two men pronounced unfit to live on God's earth, and in human society. He was "set at naught." He was "a root out of a dry ground."

All this was an expression of the position in which sin had placed man ; which is the answer to our next inquiry :

2. *What was the object of this humiliated state?* — As a representative of two parties, God and man, or of law and transgression, he must enter into the estate of both. To be surety for man, he must be man, and man under a broken law. He must fulfil its righteousness ; for, unless he were Jesus Christ the righteous, he could not be accepted of the Father. That righteousness must be a righteousness of obedience. He must pay our debts, bear our penalties, satisfy for our offences, and have a claim as mediator on the good we need.

As a Power entering our humanity in its fallen condition, he must meet us where we are, to assure us of his sympathy, and win our hearts. God must stoop to reach us. If a king would redeem his subjects, and not sacrifice the majesty of the law they have violated, he must abase himself. If the Son of the Highest would redeem us by moral power, he must be a model of all he would have us be ; showing in his own life unlimited submission ; unlimited confidence ; unlimited absorption of zeal, or consecration to another's glory ; unlimited patience in bearing injuries and trials in our mortal state ; these he must show us in the details of a human life.

He must honor the lowest condition of humanity ; he must pour contempt on the highest station, in comparison with personal excellence and usefulness in the lowest.

All this required him to be man — man worthy of the highest station, but, in fact, abased to the lowest.

3. *What was, then, the motive of the Son of God in entering upon this estate of humiliation ?* — It was love, divine love, as God ; human love as man, as soon as his human faculties comprehended for what end they were created. He “ loved me, and gave himself for me,” is the wondering language of every redeemed man. The prospect of our misery and degradation moved his compassion. The prospect of our elevation and salvation stirred his soul to intense and unquenchable desires to procure it for us.

We are now prepared to consider :

III. THE LORD'S DESIRE TO RESUME HIS ORIGINAL GLORY.— And here we would first obtain a clear idea

1. *How that glory could be regained.* — It has been stated that the glory of the Godhead had been veiled in the incarnation. Now, there were wanting two things to complete this glorious work of redemption : That he who had thus humiliated himself for a time should, by the Father's consent, resume that original glory, that it might be known henceforth in earth, heaven, and hell, that he who thus humbled himself is true and very God. And then it must also be permitted to this human nature of Christ to share that glory, so far as is compatible with a human nature. And it was all, not natural, but supernatural. He must be sustained

through the tremendous trials which lay before him; enabled to gain the most resplendent victory the universe ever saw, over Satan, sin, earth, death, and hell. He must triumph over death in dying, and over the grave in coming under its bondage. He must rise from the dead; the leader of a rising race, ascend to the palace of God, and sit as God-man at the head of the universe. This is the glory he asked to have bestowed upon him.

2. *Why did he desire it?*—That the universe might see divine love triumphant over satanic malignity, and wearing the crown of its victory. Having discharged all he had undertaken as our Mediator, it was most proper that he should now be publicly acquitted of any further demands of humiliation or sacrifice. Having merited the crown and sceptre as the King of Israel, he should now receive it. He longed, too, that the joy of his disciples might be complete. There were those, from the beginning, who had made common cause with him. There should be such to the end of time; and they are dear to him as his dearest friends. And for their sakes, who have loved him in his obscurity, like an exiled prince, he would be restored to his throne, that he might honor and reward their attachment to him, by revealing to them and to those who despised their piety the real character of him they have been thus loving and aiding, simply for what he is in himself, and not for the sake of any external badges of honor. Nay; the whole intelligent universe is represented in the Scripture as held in some kind of suspense, until Christ should take the throne as mediator.

Some have supposed that even the elect angels were not confirmed till that period. We are told expressly that the condition of all the redeemed who preceded the resurrection of Christ, was imperfect, and waiting for the sealing of his return.

There remains, then, but one other point to be considered.

3. *Why did our Lord need to pray for this?*—The inquiry involves several of the difficulties men find in understanding the Scriptures. One is, the very nature of prayer itself, and particularly prayer to God for a good which he has already rendered certain. It would suffice here to say, that that objection lies against all prayer. When Daniel found by books that the time for restoring the captives to their country had come, he gave himself to a course of abstemious living, and to meditation and prayer for this very event. We may be sure of this,—not that Daniel had not sufficient sagacity to appreciate our embarrassment, but that he had too much wisdom and holiness to give any weight to it. When God had promised great blessings to Israel, then he says, “I will yet for this be inquired of, by the house of Israel, to do it for them.”—Ez. 36 : 37. The thing to be done was in itself most proper, desirable, nay, sure; and yet must be sought for in prayer. That is the wisdom of heaven, though it may not be according to the wisdom of earth.

There remains another difficulty. How could prayer be offered by the Son of God to his Father? But this is only a part of the mysterious arrangement by which we are to be saved. The Father sends and employs, sustains and rewards,

the Son. All of this phraseology includes facts of which we can comprehend but a portion of the meaning ; but that portion is of immeasurable consequence to us. We are taught that the coëternal Son is sent of the Father ; that in the whole work of redemption he occupies a subordinate place. As the great High Priest of the church, he is represented as making continual intercession for us. And this prayer was but a part and expression of his subordination.

It is, then, an immeasurable evil to deny the divine glory of Christ.—You cannot assign him any middle place. He utterly refuses it at your hands. Your compliments about his excellence, and his being the greatest and the best man, and a sort of divine man, are : first robbing a king of his crown ; and then presenting one or two of its jewels as a token of your reverence and loyalty. “ Before Abraham was, I am,” he says ; and you make him a liar and a blasphemer, and men so understand you, if you deny it. Obscure his glory, and you know nothing of the glory of God. How do you know the Father ? By his works. But the Son made everything that was made. If you find infinite power and wisdom in creation and providence, if you find God in the moral government of the world, it is the Son you meet there. “ No man knoweth the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal him.” God shines through his works, his words, and the personal manifestation in the Son, who “ was in the bosom of the Father, and the express image of his person.” Deny God in his works, and you have no God. Deny him in his word, and you have only the pagan

idea of him. Deny him as manifested in the Son, and, whatever else you are, you are not a worshipper of the God of the Bible. You would know the wisdom of God. But as it is an essential, eternal property of the divine nature, we cannot comprehend it. We see it in its operations and productions; none of them more glorious than redemption, the salvation of the church. So Paul describes it: "To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." "In Christ are hid *all* the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." "Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Men who deny the Deity of Christ speak much of the love of God. But God furnishes the highest proof of his love, not in the man Christ Jesus coming to teach; but in his giving his Son to become a man, and to die for the sins of men. Herein is love; and it is before this love of the Father in giving his Son to the lowliness of his human estate, to agony and death; this love of the Son in leaving the glory he had with the Father, that the heart yields. There is no point on which the great enemy of souls is more earnest than on this. The wisest pagan philosophers were unable to shun the rocks of a debasing enslavement to the world, so long as they remained ignorant of God, as revealed in the person of the Son; for that was as much the revelation to the Jewish, as it is to the Christian church. Abraham, Christ says, rejoiced

to see his day. Our personal sanctification depends on our seeing the glory of Christ. "Beholding as in a glass the glory of God, we are changed into the same image." But, if he were only a man, then he merely taught us; he did not love us on the throne of heaven, and come to redeem us. Our fitness for heaven depends upon our seeing his glory by faith here. "He that believeth in me hath everlasting life." Believeth what? That "I came down from the Father," willingly resigning the glory I had with the Father before the world was; that I bare his sins in my body; that I sit on the right hand of majesty, as king, as intercessor. This belief is not the dead, cold morality of which the world boasts; it is the love that gives life to all other moral excellence. It is for these persons thus Christ supplicates in a subsequent part of this prayer: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." That prayer will be answered as death comes with his kind hand, and lifts the veil that hides eternity and Jesus. Now, we are to walk by faith; then, by sight; faith in the mysterious Trinity; faith in the divine and human natures of Jesus; faith in his primitive glory, in his voluntary abasement, in his resumption of that glory; faith in our own interest in that glory. This is the life of the church. It was Paul's life. When he talked of heaven, he did not speak of meeting either his friends there, or God the Father. Heaven to him was to depart and be with Christ. What was Paul, the aged; Paul, the great master-builder of the Lord's church; Paul, whom Christ commis-

sioned to face the potentates of the earth as his representative?—was he an idolator? No; seeing Christ is seeing the Father. “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father also.”

No man can tell what New England has suffered by the bold, open denial of Christ’s participation in the Godhead; and that many who have done it should now be retracing their steps is a sign of great promise. O! it is not a question of party strife, of mere theological hair-splitting. It is the question whether Christ is an impostor; whether the church is on a rock, or on sand; whether I am to believe in Christ and love Christ less than God, or as God; whether my Saviour, to whom, with the dying Stephen, I am to commit my departing spirit, can hear me in that hour; or, whether I and my neighbor who calls on the Virgin Mary in that hour are alike idolators, going before God’s judgment-seat in the very act of insulting his majesty, and breaking his commandment.

We are to feel a deep solicitude for those who place the world before Christ in their affections.—They are blind. Here is true glory, and they see it not. They chase shadows; trust in the arm of flesh and uncertain riches. They seek the honor that cometh from man, but know not the glory of believing in Christ, suffering for him, reigning with him.

They despise their only Saviour.

The glory of Christ should be the theme of our daily meditations.—His primitive glory is a powerful theme of thought. It fixes the attention, fills the soul with awe, and prepares to appreciate his condescension. Creation and

providence show that glory ; for he it was who laid the foundations of the earth. But his incarnation, his earthly life, and his death, are the most important themes of human thought. Not a day should pass without their occupying our minds. While his present and future glory will perfect our characters just so far as we cordially believe and devoutly contemplate them.

III.

THE ATONEMENT PERFECTLY MADE BY CHRIST'S DEATH.

"By one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." — Heb. 10: 14.

A TREATISE was written at the beginning of the twelfth century by the renowned Anselm, on the question, "Wherefore has God become Man?" He opens it with this remark: "Whatever man can say or know on this subject, there will yet remain profounder reasons for it than those he may have discovered." So can we say of the Atonement, "we know in part." The divines of New England have accomplished a great work by discovering in it a principle of moral government, and showing how God could consistently make a sacrifice to his own justice. But it is hurtful to leave the subject there, as if it were fully comprehended by any act of the speculative understanding.

The priesthood of Christ is not yet fully understood on earth; nor is the power of his sacrifice at this day completely felt, even by believers. May light shine upon our minds, and beams of vital heat from the cross fall upon our hearts, while we are gazing upon it here!

I propose to inquire what the Atonement is, and what are its effects; and from this to show that it was made by one offering.

I. THE NATURE OF THE ATONEMENT. — It is here described as an offering, and a single offering.

1. *The Atonement is an offering up of the body and soul of Jesus as an expiation.* — Expiatory offerings belong to all the religions that preceded Christianity. But in only one of them have we evidence of its being divinely appointed. We can no more doubt the institution of expiatory sacrifices, by God's direction, at Mt. Sinai, than we can doubt the most authentic facts in history. But there are frequent intimations, during the continuance of that system, that it was not to endure forever. "Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?" was a startling inquiry in the ears of men who had never looked beyond the surface of their sacrifices. It was light in advance of his day for David to say, "The sacrifices of God are a broken heart." Micah makes the bold appeal, "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

Yet that system of bloody offerings was appointed of God, and had most important meanings and effects. Its essential features were these: there was an order of men selected by divine choice as sacrificers and mediators: they not only took, as Levites, the place of the first-born sons of all the Jewish families who had by their birthright been domestic

priests ; but they were, under very solemn circumstances, substituted for them as a ransom. When the first-born of Egypt were slain, the first-born of Israel were spared. And as a ransom-price for them, Jehovah appropriated the entire tribe of Levi to his own immediate service ; and then from them the priests were chosen, in Aaron's line of descent. The existence of the priesthood was thus a continual exhibition both of substitution and redemption. These men offered to God the valuable gifts of such as had transgressed his commandments. And a large part of the offerings were sacrifices, or the life-blood of the innocent in place of that of the guilty.

All these essential features of the ancient sacrifices are preserved in the real atonement of the New Testament, only modified in their forms. There is now, as then, a priest called of God, as was Aaron. There is now, as then, a valuable sacrifice offered by the *offender* to the *offended*. But the modification is this : the sacrifice or loss is now on the part of the *offended*. That constitutes its efficacy. On the part of the offerer it is presented merely by an humble acquiescing faith ; which has ever been the stone of stumbling and rock of offence in the cross. There is now, as then, a life offered. Blood poured forth from vital channels, as the expression of suffering and death, is the great feature of atonement made prominent in the ancient sacrifices, most prominent in the great expiatory sacrifice. The points of contrast are very fully drawn out in the epistle to the Hebrews. The priests of the old atonement were sinners ;

the Priest of the new expiation is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. He did not offer an expiation for himself, consequently, as they did. Death was to them in the course of nature. With him it was the result of a special voluntary consecration. Their deaths had nothing remarkable. They lived for the sake of their services. Dying terminated their services. His death was the end for which he came into the world. It was the crowning feature of his eternal priesthood. They offered other men's sacrifices ; he gave himself. The priest and the victim were in him identical. They offered beasts' bodies ; he offered a human body. They offered an animal spirit ; he poured out a human soul on God's altar. Their priesthood ended when he was offering his great sacrifice. He is “a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”

But there is one peculiar feature of his atonement, which is made prominent in the text.

2. His expiatory offering was made once and forever. — They attended daily at the altar. Stated daily sacrifices required their presence there ; and they must be in attendance whenever an offerer should present himself. And the office was hereditary, so that death might make no breach in the service. For fifteen hundred years they continued that work of the priesthood, more or less interrupted by wars, and captivities, and declensions. No man can compute the number of victims which were slain by this priesthood. But when the true Priest had come, and the Lamb of God was provided, then he was offered once for all. That death on the

little eminence called Calvary was the great event of time and of eternity. It blotted out the law of bloody sacrifices and expiatory offerings forever. It darkened the sun by its suffering; and it rent the veil of the temple, because the mystery of the old system was now opened to the gaze of the universe, and because the way to heaven was really opened to us. It shook the earth as the citadel of Satan's empire, and burst the graves of the dead, as it was the rending of the seal and sentence of death. So the pen of inspiration explains the rending of the veil. "The way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as yet the first tabernacle was standing, which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; but Christ being come a high priest of future good, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

That long succession of priests, and that continued series of expiatory offerings by the church, is very affecting to us, viewed in its intrinsic inefficiency, its merciful appointment by God, or its real value as issuing in and preparing for the great atonement. We now inquire,

II. IN WHAT CONSISTED THE EFFICACY OF CHRIST'S SACRIFICE?—In the text it is said, "By one offering he perfected forever them that are sanctified." "Sanctify" is used in this epistle in a peculiar sense, as you may see in the

ninth chapter, thirteenth verse, where, speaking of the external and temporary influence of the ancient sacrifices, they are said to have “sanctified to the purifying of the flesh;” that is, taken away the ceremonial defilement which hindered the worshipper from approaching God. Ordinarily the New Testament meaning of *sanctify* is to produce spiritual or inward purification. Here it includes that, but refers chiefly to removing that guilt by which our consciences keep us from approaching God, and his holiness prevents his admitting us to audience and communion with him.

The efficacy of the atonement consists in its reconciling God to the believing worshipper. But, as some deny, and others vaguely admit, that the atonement removes any obstacles on God's part, as a God of justice, I would first show from the Scriptures that it has a two-fold efficacy, and then show, as far as I may, wherein its efficacy consists.

1. *The Scriptures assign to the sacrifice of Christ a two-fold efficacy: as reconciling God to man, and reconciling man to God.* — If there be not in the human soul a deep and dreadful apprehension of the wrath of God, then there is nothing there. Individuals may escape it; but nations and generations — Pagan, Jewish, Mohammedan, or Christian — testify to it. And if the Gospel of Christ is not designed to meet that feeling, then language has no meaning. Yet there are those who deny that the sacrifice of Christ procures any change in God. I should wish to ask any unsophisticated person that understands the Hebrew, what the Jews meant by בְּקָרֶב; and by the expression נִשְׁרֵר-פְּשָׁע; or, if he un-

derstands the Greek, what the Hellenistic Jews meant by ἐξάλειψον τό ἀτόμητα μον; or what we mean by the corresponding words, forgive and forgiveness. If a man offends another by a wrong act, there are two evils: the wrong he has done the other, and the injury done himself. They are two perfectly distinct results from the same act. And no sane man ever thought of applying the term forgive to a doing away of the evil one has inflicted on himself. A man wounds another's good name by a falsehood. Now, he may repent of the lie most sincerely, and so put away the injury it inflicted on himself; but that is a very different thing from being forgiven by the other. And this distinction the Scriptures most fully recognize. Repentance is one thing; forgiveness, quite another. Repentance is a human act, forgiveness is an act of God. "Repent and be converted, *that* your sins may be blotted out." Now, the atonement produces both effects: it reconciles the sinner to God, and God to the sinner; or, in other words, produces repentance and forgiveness. Passages of this kind are very numerous: "Through this man is preached the forgiveness of sins;" Christ is "exalted a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins; by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." Justification and sanctification are entirely distinct; the one being a change in our personal character; the other, in our relations to the moral government of God. Christ is called our passover. But what was the passover? A lamb slain, that its sprinkled blood on the door-post might save from death. The atone-

ment of Christ refers first to past sins, and to that relation in which they place us to the justice of God. It is in this sense that Christ bore our sins. He suffered in consequence of them, that we might not.

But the Scriptures likewise assign to the atonement a mighty effect on him who receives it by faith. That effect is both direct and indirect. It acts directly on the conscience, bringing peace. This is in part the meaning of the word "perfected" in the text. "Come unto me, ye weary and burdened; I will give you rest." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." The blood of Christ, called the blood of sprinkling, is said to "speak better things than the blood of Abel;" this crying "revenge;" that, "forgive." This is the influence of the atonement on the guilt-stricken conscience. A guilty conscience forbids the sinner to approach even the mercy-seat of God. Therefore the Scriptures say, "The blood of Christ purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God." The indirect effect of the atonement in sanctifying the heart is powerfully taught in that mysterious language of Christ, "whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life." Paul teaches it, too, when he says, "We are crucified by the cross; we are dead with Christ; buried with him by baptism into death."

Can we, then, explain this efficacy of the atonement? The Scriptures enter into no direct and profound explanations of this point. But we are permitted to contemplate, and dis-

cover, by incidental light in them, and by experience, at least some of

2. *These sources or elements of its power.*—It is, indeed, sufficient for all the practical purposes of life, that we have adequate evidence of the efficacy or power of any substance or agent, without understanding the mode of its operation. It ought to be so in religion. We have perfectly resolved anything, in fact, when we have resolved it into the will of God. The efficacy of everything lies there. Steam is powerful. But what do you know about the secret of its power? You call it *expansion*. But that is only a name. God has chosen that water heated to a certain degree shall possess certain powers; that is to us the ultimate fact. So it is with light, with medical remedies, mechanical powers, and everything in nature.

To us, then, the testimony of God is conclusive, that the sacrifice offered by Christ, of himself, on the cross, has the power to secure forgiveness from God, peace to the human conscience, and holiness to the human heart. We can see in the common explanation very sufficient reasons for the power of the atonement with God. It guards the public interests, just as the promulgation and execution of law do; only in a much greater degree. There are three classes of minds to be affected by the atonement: the holy, the impenitent, and the penitent. And when we see that on each of these classes the atonement strengthens the conviction of God's aversion to sin, we can see why God exercises his mercy freely through the atonement toward every penitent believer. The holy and

the impenitent see in the atonement just what they see in the law,—suffering, the consequence of sin,—only under infinitely more impressive circumstances than in the execution of the penalty of the law. · It is very obvious how it affects the conscience of the penitent, deepening his horror of sin, but releasing him from despair. Then it comes upon his heart, an everlasting impulse of motive, constraining him to live for Christ; which is, to live holily. The atonement includes all the ignominy, and sorrow, and agony, to which the Son of God subjected himself for our redemption. God must make his feelings known, as we do, by speech and actions. Voluntary suffering is the highest form of action, giving to expressions of love their deepest significancy, and most potent confirmation. But love to God is the essence of obedience to the law; and, if he draws us to love him, he draws us to obedience. He shows us, in the most vivid form, his approbation of the law by the life and death of Jesus Christ; his life being an exhibition of perfect obedience to its precept; and his death being an equivalent to enduring its penalty, after a life of perfect obedience to its precept. His life and death are thus a constant appeal to our consciences, to our sympathies, and to every generous sentiment of our hearts. Nothing can be more efficacious than this to inspire a dread of sin, confidence in God, grateful obedience, and fortitude in temptation.

But the text affirms, what we now proceed to contemplate; that

III. THE ATONEMENT CONSISTS IN A SINGLE OBLATION.—

"By one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." This was a stumbling-block to the Jews, who had always been accustomed to see the daily repetition of the oblation. The fact is so obvious to us, however, that we need not dwell upon it, that the Son of God became incarnate once, suffered on earth, and died a violent death, once, and is never to repeat the process. The second time he appears here, it will be "without sin unto salvation," — without the sins of men imputed to him. But we may suggest considerations to account for it :

1. *The permanence or the repetition of Christ's sufferings is not necessary for the purposes of atonement.* — If we look at the influence of it on other beings, good and bad, we can see that the transient acts of Christ's life, and the permanent assumption of our nature for our redemption, are an eternal guarantee of his love of the law. If we look at its effects on the pardoned, it is sufficient that Christ lived here thirty-three years, and died once. The mother that bore you, and cherished you in infancy's helpless years, needs not repeat all that, in order to convince you of her love, or to strengthen her claims upon your love. Our fathers stood up and read the Declaration of Independence in the face of Britain and the world. They laid all upon the altar there, and followed up that act by the perils and toils of a dreadful war. Do we need the repetition of those struggles and sacrifices to convince us of their attachment to our freedom ? A stranger rushed into the flames, and saved you from a horrid death, when you were a child. Have you

ever forgotten it? Will you ever forget it? God needed only to express once, in this form, his unvarying grief at our sins,—his uncompromising opposition to them. Nay, more:

2. The permanent suffering of the innocent and benevolent Redeemer would defeat the very end of atonement.

— That end is, to diminish suffering in the universe. If we are to be saved at the eternal expense of such a Being; if he is to be forever buffeted and spit upon, while we are crowned with glory; if he is to sink under the Father's frown, while we rejoice in the light of his countenance, — then the cost is too great. To awaken the most generous sentiments in the hearts of the redeemed, and to sustain them, Christ must be rewarded with everlasting honor and joy. To enjoy heaven by the continued sufferings of our Friend and Redeemer, would make us selfish; to see his sufferings, and not be selfish, would make our own happiness impossible. “He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. Now, once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” “By one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” That sacrifice is sufficient for all who are brought to repent. It is an atonement for all,—a redemption only to them who are sanctified. It is to them sufficient for all their sins,—for all time,—for all eternity. As the Scriptures say, the old sacrifices would never have ceased to be offered, if they had possessed any real efficacy; “because that the worshippers, once purged, should have no more conscience of sin.” The Father will forever retain the memory

of that sacrifice ; the universe will never forget it ; and so, the ends of justice shall be satisfied. Suffering crowned with glory will forever satisfy the heart of the redeemed. " This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God."

The Apostle's argument has, to this day, lost none of its force. — The Jews understood the doctrine of propitiation, or atonement, so imperfectly as utterly to defeat its design. There was an external, civil benefit resulting from offering their sacrifices. " They sanctified to the purifying of the flesh," — that is, they were a part of their duty as subjects of that civil estate of which Jehovah was directly the King. He rewarded obedience to it as a civil requirement by civil benefits. But they went away, blessed in their outward estate by their king, from that altar, while the curse of their God, for unpardonable sin, remained on their souls. And even when the Antitype had come, they refused to believe in the Lamb of God, who by his sacrifice taketh away the sin of the world. They wanted still a daily offering, and would not believe in that one perfect, eternal Offering for sin. Their spirit is still perpetuated among us, under the garb of Christianity. In the churches of Rome, Russia, and England, there are priests still offering up daily sacrifice for sin. The very name of priest, applied to a New Testament minister, is suspicious. Masses, penances, mediators, purgatory, the offering of the body and blood of Christ literally, are all so many contradictions of the unity and perfectness of Christ's atonement. The sacrifice of sacraments,

and the atoning power of our alms-givings, penitence, and praying, are enemies of the cross of Christ. To them all Paul says, “It is not possible that” they “should take away sins.” “We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ, once for all.” “Every priest standeth daily, ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God; for by one offering he hath forever perfected them that are sanctified.”

We see who they are that receive the full benefit of the atonement. — Not they who merely have the sentence of eternal death temporarily suspended by the atonement,— that is, the benefit of it, which all enjoy; since, but for Christ’s death, this divine forbearance would be impossible; but it is so far only a suspension. Nor do they receive the full benefit of Christ’s death who justify themselves to their own consciences only, and not to God,— who say and believe they have not deserved death. This may satisfy their own consciences; but it is only Christ’s sacrifice that satisfies God’s justice. Nor do they get the full benefit of Christ’s great offering who attempt to satisfy God with the atonement of Christ, without applying it to their own hearts for sanctification.

They only are truly benefited by the wonderful sacrifice made by the Son of God, who truly return to God by it,— who use it equally with God, their own consciences, and their hearts.

Why, then, do any reject this atonement? Some do it from insensibility to their guilt; while others, sensible of their need of an atonement, doubt whether, after all, God has grace enough to receive them through it. Most persons, however, reject it from an aversion to its very principle, it pronounces so emphatically and awfully the demerit of our souls, our guilt, our helplessness, the worthlessness of our services, and the moral equality of the whole unregenerated race of men. These aspects of it repel every sinful sensibility of the human heart, and chiefly its pride. Here is “the offence of the cross.”

Then let us rightly use the atonement of Christ, by making it the only basis of our peace with God,—of our present enjoyment, and our hope of future good. Some, even in the church, have peace and hope from other sources. But these streams are not healthful nor permanent. We must apply to our consciences “the blood of sprinkling,”—make the “one offering” of Christ the object of our delighted contemplation. “Precious blood of Christ” is a Scripture phrase we must comprehend and adopt. We must see that Christ is “a sweet savor to God.” We must “glory in the cross of Christ.” We are also to apply it to our hearts, saying, “Alas! and did my Saviour bleed? Was it for crimes that I had done he groaned upon the tree?” And when we repeat these words, it is not to pity him as now suffering, but to sympathize with his past suffering,—to remind ourselves that he would suffer again, if it were necessary, for us,—that we virtually repeat his crucifixion by our sins.

We cannot too often, in imagination, visit that garden where he bowed, and cried, “ Father, if thou wilt, let this cup pass from me.” These visits are not gloomy, but penitentially tender, and reverentially sympathizing, grateful, tearful, joyful ; like showers watering the germs of hope that grace has planted in our souls.

O, proclaim to the world, burdened with the vague consciousness of guilt, that they are guilty, but that here is an atonement for guilt ! Let every one that heareth the glad tidings, be a missionary ! Proclaim it to Pagan, Papist, Mohammedan, Infidel, Jew, and the most careless worldling. Here is the rock of hope ; here is the door of life ; here is the balm to heal the soul’s disease, and to give it an immortal life.

IV.

THE MIRACLES.

"Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake."—John 14: 11.

CHRIST was here addressing only his eleven apostles. They believed already much, but not all. They received him as the long-expected Messiah; as a true prophet, as the greatest of prophets; but they did not know that he was "in the Father, and the Father in him;" that he is the Word that "in the beginning was with God, and was God." He wanted them to see by faith the Godhead in his lowly form.

He therefore brings all the weight of his veracity to create in them a full belief in his divinity. They ought to believe him. There is a moral obligation to believe in goodness wherever it is exhibited, in moral truth wherever it is spoken, in God whenever he speaks. But God accommodates himself to man's infirmity, and addresses him through works of such a kind that his reason will not, or should not, suffer him to doubt they are divine works.

Christ had now been with those men more than three years. They had witnessed his works; beginning with the miracle at the wedding, ending with the miraculous informa-

tion that they should meet a man on their path, bearing a pitcher, as they entered the city, who would, at his request, furnish them a room for the passover. The stupendous miracle of the resurrection had not yet occurred. But at least thirty-six miraculous works are described, and many more merely alluded to. Three times he had caused fish to enter the nets of his disciples in a supernatural way. He had, by a word, furnished bread for twelve thousand persons. He had walked on the stormy sea, and upheld Peter on it. He had twice calmed the tempest by a word. He had healed eight sick persons, one lunatic, six blind, eleven lepers, one paralytic, one with a withered hand, five demoniacs, one deaf mute, and raised three dead persons to life. And there are frequently expressions used by the Evangelists, which show that these were but a small portion of his miraculous deeds.

To these works he now refers, and says, Believe me on their account, if not on my own statement. They unveil my divinity, surely.

I shall now propose two inquiries. Should we believe that these miracles were ever performed? Should we believe Christ on account of them?

I. SHOULD WE BELIEVE THE MIRACLES? — This question subdivides itself, to meet different objections.

1. *Are miracles possible?* — Mr. Hume says, no; Spinoza says, no; and a thousand less acute and less learned echo, no. Shall we repeat their echo? If we must, let us do it with understanding. It has seemed to some men that they were increasing in wisdom in proportion as they doubted

what others believed. They have even gloried in the title of sceptic. But they were deceived; for there are very few sceptics, if any, in the world. Some have gloried in having no creed. But they deceived themselves. They had a creed. Now, on the subject of miracles our modern infidels are stout believers. They believe that if God desires to bring a new power into his creation, he *cannot* do it. That, surely, is strong believing. But that is what is meant by saying “a miracle is impossible.” And you that mean to be sceptics should not have so strong an article in your creed. It is not only too much of a creed, but it is bigoted. It will keep us out of your infidel church, because we have not strong enough faith to believe that an almighty God, who made everything out of nothing, cannot make something out of something; that he who could make living men from dust, could not make a living man of a dead one.

“Miracles impossible!” How often the changes have been rung upon that groundless dogma! If they were impossible, how are we to find it out? “By our reason,” we are told. But what is meant by reason? — intuitive perception? Whose? If mine, it does not tell me so. Another man’s? Then I am divided in my believing; for A says it is, and B says it is not. Is it reasoning? Then you can tell me yours. Perhaps you have adopted that of Mr. Hume, “the order of nature cannot be violated.” But what do you mean by the order of nature? A power above God? Did he exhaust himself in creation? Did he give nature more power than he possessed himself? If not, then I cannot

infer that he *cannot* introduce a new power to change the course of things, if he thinks it best to do so. No man *can* prove that miracles are beyond the power of the Almighty.

I sit at the feet of a learned geologist, and he shows me a beginning of an order of animals. He pauses with reverence there, and says a new power here comes into exercise; nothing that has gone before, accounts for this. We then pass over a series of strata, and, lo! there breaks upon our vision another new order. Creative power! he exclaims. A miracle! He comes on to man, not growing out of a pumpkin or a monkey, but made man in the image of God; made by no power or law that preceded, but by a miracle, contrary to all God's former experience. Am I now to believe the geologist or the theologian? Then another inquiry arises.

2. *Are miracles improbable or incredible?*—It has been, and still is, so affirmed. Mr. Hume maintained that, even if a miracle could be performed, it could not be substantiated by any amount of testimony. Jesus Christ, therefore, never did raise the dead, nor calm the tempest by a word, nor himself rise from the dead.

And Mr. Hume, and other unbelieving believers, know it, not by being older than other people, not by having been cotemporary with Christ; but simply and solely by the insight they have into the capacities of an omnipotent God. They have reasoned out a path for the Almighty to walk in, and a work for him to do; and he must not go beyond it. Yes, this is the absurdity of self-conceited wisdom. It could not invent a blade of grass, not make the wing of a butterfly;

but it knows absolutely that God cannot bring a dead man to life ! Again, I inquire, on what ground can a man living in America, in the year 1853, affirm concerning a person living in Syria, in the year 33, that he did not do all that ? Simply on the general ground of the impossibility of believing anything that contradicts our own experience, and that of our neighbors. For instance, we have always seen the sun rise in the east, and set in the west. We can, therefore, believe no degree of testimony whatever, that should affirm the sun set in the east on a certain evening, and rose in the west the next morning. And if man should not believe it, on account of its intrinsic improbability, then God should not; for, if it is not true, it is as contrary to his experience as to ours. When so great an event is affirmed as that a dead body at a command rose up in life and health, we must not believe it, and God must not believe it. And the reason of this necessity is a universal, eternal principle. "What is contrary to all experience cannot be true." Now, let us see where that reasoning will carry us. In all God's existence there never was a moment when man could begin to exist. Why ? Because, up to that moment, God had never had the experience of a man beginning to exist, of something made out of nothing, or a living man out of dead matter. Therefore, the human race is coëternal with God, and never was made by him. Atheism is consistent for those who pretend to be eminently logical, and deny the possibility of believing a miracle, but nothing short of it is so; it is not logical, but cowardly and illogical. As one well says, "Deny

revelation, and I can push you irresistibly to atheism; John Marshall himself cannot resist me."

Passing, then, away from these absurd positions, we encounter this rational inquiry affecting the probability of miracles: Is it not unlikely that our beneficent Creator would disturb that regular order of events, that sequence of causes and effects on which science is founded, on which human happiness and the progress of society are so dependent? The simple and complete answer to that reasonable inquiry is, if a beneficent Creator can answer a purpose of sufficient importance, he may do so; and, especially, if it be done so infrequently, and on so limited a scale, as not to derange the order of the universe. And such is the character of the miracles of Jesus. They have caused no law of nature to cease its regular operation, and they have aided a faith that saves the soul.

We come now directly to meet the main question again. Having disposed of the two chief objections, that miracles are impossible, or, at least, incredible, we inquire,

3. *Have we a sufficient and satisfactory ground of belief that Christ performed those miraculous works which are attributed to him in the New Testament?*—Having disposed of those two difficulties, as questions of philosophy, this question becomes one of mere history. And we meet it as we do any other question of authenticity in historical documents. There are many false records in history. The canons of historical criticism are, however, so definite and sound, that no doubt remains in any sane mind

whether Julius Cæsar entered Gaul and Britain as a conqueror ; whether, in a word, his record of that expedition is substantially true. Precisely the same tests will show that Jesus lived in Syria at the beginning of the Christian era. It is so certain, that the civilized world dates from the beginning of his history as recorded by four writers in the Bible. There is a perfect chain of evidence that those four monographers appeared while the generation yet existed, that was cotemporaneous with Christ ; that the miracles were declared to have taken place while yet the persons were living who could have contradicted the narrative ; that the Christian church was founded on the faith of the miraculous person and works of Jesus Christ ; and men perished by thousands in and for affirming the truth of them.

Now, as has been well urged, there is in these facts a moral miracle more astonishing than any of these physical miracles, provided there were never such a personage, or that he never performed such works.

The case may be stated thus : There lived in Syria, about eighteen hundred years ago, a large number of respectable and sensible people, who affirmed, by writing and orally, that they had seen Jesus of Nazareth ; that some had witnessed his calling the dead to life, and various other miraculous deeds ; and in every part of the country they named the places and the persons. They declared, concerning a man born blind, that the Pharisees had expelled him from the synagogue for his faith in his own healing ; that they knew Lazarus had been raised from the dead, and that they sought

to put him out of the way. Nay, there were five hundred who affirmed that they saw Jesus himself alive, after he had been dead. Their enemies opposed them, murdered them; but none of that age are known ever to have contradicted the facts they asserted. That was reserved for men of a remoter age, and of distant countries. Now, the moral miracle here involved is, that these people could have been got to make up such a story, if it be a fabrication; that they should have named Lazarus, and Bartimeus, and Bethany, and Jerusalem; that they should have proclaimed these facts in the face of intelligent enemies; that before the Roman tribunal they should have insisted on them; that they should have endured every form of insult, injury, and murder, out of confidence in these facts; that with the false testimony of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, should be joined the perfect character and perfect moral code of Christ; and that on all this base imposture should be founded all modern civilization!

On grounds purely historical, we then believe that Jesus Christ performed the miraculous works attributed to him.

Our second inquiry was this:

II. SHOULD WE BE INDUCED BY THEM TO ADMIT THE CLAIMS OF CHRIST TO DIVINITY? — We should, because

1. *They are the acts of a Creator.* — Creation does not display allmighty, or infinite might; only the power that to us is without limit; and which, therefore, we should presume to be infinite. But, whatever power creation displays, a true miracle exhibits the same. And, as we have the

admission of all deists and infidels that the acts attributed to Jesus Christ, if realities, are a mastery over the powers of nature, we need not now go into an exhibition of our reasons for believing it to be so. To us, Christ standing on the sea, and bidding the winds and waves to be still, and thus by a word controlling their tremendous material energy, is just as much an exhibition of Godhead, as the causing light to exist by a word. In fact, to us there is a strong significance in his performing his miraculous works generally by a word, when a simple volition would have been as efficient. We recognize the same voice saying, "Let there be light!" that said, "Lazarus, come forth!" "Young man, I say unto thee arise!" Yes; we believe him "for the works' sake." "He is in the Father, and the Father in him."

But must we, then, attribute divinity to every man performing miracles? By no means. And this leads me to remark further, that

2. *Christ is the efficient agent in all miracles.*—It would carry us too far into a mere branch of our subject to produce the evidence that this is true of the Old Testament miracles. It will suffice for our present purpose to show it concerning those of the New Testament. The evidence lies in these facts: Christ promised to give this supernatural power to his apostles; they always recognized it as his, and employed it to commend him. The moral impression produced by the apostles' miraculous works was never to secure glory to themselves, but to inspire confidence in Christ's divinity, and in the divine origin of Christianity.

We have the record of his first commission and instructions to his apostles. I will quote it in part: "And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease." This was repeated afterwards, in various forms. In order definitely and positively to show the divine or Messianic origin of the wonderful powers which clothed the apostles, they were commanded to tarry at Jerusalem until the Spirit should descend upon them. He came down with most impressive external signs. Thus the apostle addressed the multitude wondering at the gift of tongues, declaring to them that Christ was then exalted at the right hand of the Father, and had shed forth that influence. And afterward two of them most earnestly entreated the people not to offer sacrifices to them, nor to look on them as though their holiness or power had performed these wonderful things. It was Christ, and not they; and everywhere there were converts, not to Peter and Thomas, but to Christ, as the result of this exercise of miraculous power. Christianity came into existence, a faith in Christ as God working with a power above the powers of nature. There can be no question, to any attentive reader, that the whole glory of miracles, by whomsoever performed, concentrates on the Lord Jesus Christ; and that they were wrought only to produce faith in him; and that such was their effect.

But we have not quite completed our argument until we consider one more fact.

3. The Lord Jesus performed miracles by his own power.—He is not separate from the Father in essence; he is distinct in person, and subordinate in office. This official subordination sometimes requires that the Father shall be made prominent and chief. But when the proper occasion comes, the Son is distinctly recognized as being the omnipotent Creator of nature, and the omnipotent source of the power to transcend nature: to counteract that tremendous moral power which has brought disorder into nature, and turned its forces into destructive channels. The Son of God “was manifested to destroy the works of the devil.” He comes to meet him on his field of victory, and to undo by moral power his mischievous work. But, subordinate to that, he meets him, and overthrows him in nature. He speaks to devils; not as the apostles did, in another’s name, but in his own name he bids them quit their usurped possession of human bodies. He commands winds and waves to allay their fury. He everywhere presents himself as the being that is doing it. And yet, lest men should rest in his human nature, he frequently repeats that the Father is in him, and he in the Father; and the works that he has seen with the Father, he does.

When Jesus was about to ascend to heaven, he said to his apostles: “Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.” And that was thenceforward their work, and the object of all their miraculous deeds; to

bear witness to the divine glory of Christ, his redeeming sacrifice, and his second coming, to judge the world. When he called Lazarus to life he did it by a divine power ; not apart from the Father, nor independent of the Father ; but in his eternal unity with the Father, and his mediatorial subordination to him. But when Peter came to open the series of apostolic miracles, under the new dispensation of the Holy Ghost, he said to the cripple, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.”

We see, then, what use we are to make of the miracles recorded in the Scriptures. — They do not strike us as wonders now. That is, they cannot impress our feelings as if we had seen them ; nor would they then, if we should have seen them repeated frequently. But they are to us an indispensable part of the history of redemption. If the stupendous miracle of redemption is to be performed, and if it involves the miracle of an incarnation of the Son of God, then we must look for some correspondent signs in nature. Prophetic eyes must gaze on his coming, from afar. The Old Testament church must have many signs and wonders pointing to him. Prodigies must attend his birth, his life, and his death. Coming to deliver men from the crushing power of natural laws now under the control of moral evil, he must show himself above those laws. Coming to set us free from Death’s dark domain, he must bring some trophies from Death’s territory, while he is yet among us. He must bid Death come forth, and confess him Conqueror.

And, then, all that represent him prominently must have

something of the same mark of heavenly power. Therefore, we are not surprised to see Moses a man endowed with immense power to work miracles. What, if we had seen him smiting Egypt with plague after plague, and relieving the wretched monarch from each, at his solicitation; should we not have believed that Moses was sent from on high? His guiding that people through the Red Sea, while it closes upon their enemies; these, and the other stupendous works of Moses, Joshua, and Elijah, acquire to us the highest degree of probability, when we come to learn their relations to Christ. They foreshadowed his coming, who holds all nature in the hollow of his hand, and who is to redeem man by his own subjection to the power of evil. The miracles of Moses and Christ are not so much to convince us, as to satisfy a want. Their absence would be an irreparable defect. To hear Christ talk of delivering us from death, and yet the leaden dominion of death to remain undisturbed by him, in the persons of his own disciples, and then at length in his own; to be called to believe in a dead Saviour,—all that might stagger our faith. But God has subjected it to no such trial. “Now is Christ risen, and become the first fruits of them that sleep.” Go tell John or Theodore, or any other inquirer or doubter, that “the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them, and blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in” Jesus.

But, it is said, others, not associated with Christ, nor con-

nected in any way with Christianity, have performed prodigies. A glance at these will suffice. They occupy three distinct positions : they are either genuine wonder-workers, great bunglers, or simply great boasters. The magicians of Egypt were the most respectable of their order. They worked with the aid of the devil, their master ; in all probability not to do real miracles, but to conjure wonderfully. That is just what we might expect. The Son of God comes to meet the Prince of Darkness in a moral struggle for the mastery over man. Both of them make nature tremble in her orb with the fierceness of their battle-strokes. Men have given themselves to Satan ; and he has rewarded them with his aid.

But your blunderers are in the Roman church, with their winking dolls, and specimens of martyr-blood, liquefying on every anniversary of the saint, for centuries. Your boasters are like Mohammed and the Mormons ; doing their miracles, where no enemy can witness them ; can test them, or contradict them.

The history of Deism furnishes a strong illustration of the Scripture : "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness."—We are prepared to demonstrate that the systems of Deists, or rather their theories, are always self-destructive ; being contradictory to facts, and contradictory to themselves. When man undertakes to set his wisdom against God, he overreaches, and trips fatally somewhere. He appears to his admirers very strong, very learned, very witty ; but, to men of sober reflection, sifting his pretensions, and

comparing his sayings with his sayings, there are in every one of their theories the seeds of its own destruction.

To select a few instances: These gentlemen strenuously oppose all dogmatizing; by which I understand them to mean asserting things to be true because we wish them to be true, without a sufficient evidence of their truth, and against satisfactory evidence. This is precisely the characteristic of every sceptical writer whose works I know. Against all the strong array of evidence which supports the miraculous facts of the New Testament, the people of Boston, for instance, are called on, on the mere assertion of one who has no means of judging that all have not, to renounce their belief in these facts, because they are in his view impossibilities. Does he prove them so by sound reasoning? Does he find a logic that limits the Almighty? Has he historical evidence? Nothing of all this. His only argument may be thus applied to another case, to test its value. There have been many forged notes on the Bank of England; therefore the Bank of England never issued any genuine notes. And yet, when some hear his strong appeals against dogmatizing, they elate their brow, and say, What a happy people we are to have got away from the dogmatizers! These philosophers object to prophecy. But when they prophesy the good time that is coming, the infidel millennium that is to bless the earth, then everybody must have faith. Isaiah is a miserable pretender; but these men, they are the true prophets. To escape the charge of dogmatizing, they modestly retreat from their bold positions, and say, No, we appeal to that

witness which is in every man's heart. But the vast majority of men say, We have no such witness in our hearts. Ah, yes, gentlemen, you have, if you only knew yourselves as well as we know you.

In one breath they tell you that all men have the absolute religion; then, in the next, they show that only a little coterie in England, Germany, and America, have it. They ridicule the old doctrines of election and regeneration; and then Mr. Newman tells you that, by a mysterious new birth, these elect, these regenerated few, have been enabled to get at the real, genuine, absolute religion, without any fragments of Fetichism or orthodoxy clinging to it.

They inform you that they know all about it, how God made man. They were not there, to be sure, at the precise day on which Adam was created, nor do they know anybody that was, nor are they fond of dogmatizing. Yet they know that man is now just as God made him at the beginning. But you have not gone two pages before the poor slave-holders, and upholders of the fugitive slave law, and what not, are rather the devil's fabric than God's.

They are great enemies of a book-revelation, and of creeds. They remind me of a man of whom I once heard, who wrote a book, the first section of which went to show that language could not convey ideas nor truth. Why, then, write a book? common sense would ask. And so, now, if the Bible cannot teach the absolute religion because it is a book, how can a book entitled Discourses on Religion do it?

It is no proof of a weak intellect that it cannot make a

religion that will bear the scrutiny of reason ; for God, alone, can do that. But it is an evidence of God's kindness to men, that he does not allow any being to invent a religion that reason cannot discover to be self-contradictory, and contradictory to facts.

There is tremendous guilt and peril in contradicting Christ. — Jesus Christ says: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." I find a sermon, purporting to have been delivered in this city, which says: "I can never believe that evil is a finality with God."

Jesus Christ says to his disciples: "Take, eat, this bread is my body." "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

This book says, however : "The Sacraments are no signs of religion to me ; they are dispensations of water, of wine, of bread, and no more."

Jesus Christ says: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," &c. This book says: "The minister of absolute religion is to hold a different talk. He is to say, my brethren, hold there ! — Stop your appeasing of God ! Wait till God is angry. Stop your imputing of righteousness ! There is no salvation in that. Stop your outcry of 'believe, believe, believe !'"

Jesus Christ says: "I am the vine, ye are the branches." This book says: "The minister is to teach man to save himself by his character and his life ; not to lean on another arm."

Jesus Christ says to the dying thief, who prayed to him

for salvation : " This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." This book says : " The common notion of the value of a little snivelling and whimpering on a death-bed is too dangerous, as well as too poor, to be taught for science in the midst of the nineteenth century."

Now, if Jesus Christ is what he claimed to be, here are idle words to be answered for ; here are words to ruin the souls of them that believe in them, because they are more palatable than those of Christ.

V.

CHRIST A PREACHER.

"Never man spake like this man."—John 7: 46.

How much it is to be regretted that man has not retained a healthful imagination, and sensibility to moral beauty ! The name of Jesus should be to us the breaking of morning on the night of our common thoughts, our sorrows, and our cares ; of our earthly passions and desires.

Let us, brethren, lift up our hearts unto God who giveth light and life, that we may now enter into the scene brought before us by these words.

Our Lord's ministry was now nearly completed ; the effects of his example and preaching were manifesting themselves so plainly and universally, that the Sanhedrim had become desperate. The prey was about to slip from their grasp, and they must either lose their position and possessions, or silence that preacher. They accordingly sent their officers to apprehend him. These men were probably accustomed to execute such orders ; and not only were selected because naturally possessed of more firmness than sensibility, but also rendered

the more insensible by having practised the duties of their office. Like other Jews, they had heard much preaching by their Rabbis, and therefore expected to find a ranter, coming utterly short of them in dignity and solemnity. The idea they had, on leaving the presence of their superiors, to go forth and execute their orders, must probably have been, that the apprehension of a fanatical preacher, disturbing the public peace, would be an easy task, and rather a pastime. So they may have gone jocularly on from street to street, until they had come to the immense multitudes gathered in and around the temple celebrating the feast of tabernacles ; and although the crowd spreads out in every street far beyond the outer walls of the temple, yet it is not difficult to find the preacher. The chief interest of that multitude seems to radiate from the vast circumference to him as its centre. The priests and the altars are losing their hold on the heart of Israel. A mysterious power draws it in another direction. They press through the throng, and approach the hallowed spot. But what checks their rude steps ? why do they not advance to seize their prey, please their masters, and secure an extra fee ? They are confounded, not with fear, but with amazement, reverence, and an unwonted human sympathy.

There he stands, incarnate Deity ! No fierceness of a mob-leader is seen in him, no cringing to formidable enemies, no caressing the populace. He stands alone and lofty in the meek dignity of a descended God. And they might first have said, “ Never man looked like that man.” But they felt the attractive force of the very power that disarmed them.

There was a presence that annihilated the authority of Sanhedrims ; there was a manifest virtue that acquitted him at the bar of their consciences. And before it they laid down their vile commission, and joined the devout and admiring hearers. This added to their wonder and reverence. Surely Moses never spake more according to the mind of God. Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, never spake with more authority than this man. He is a prophet of the living God ; and surely the elders of Israel never intended to arrest such a man ; and they returned, not with a prisoner, but with a *nolle-prosequi*, a report that there was no ground of arrest. “Never man spake like this man.”

We are favored with more light than those men. And while we take their verdict for our theme, we may contemplate it in a profounder sense than they attached to it. It contains a contrast which we would carry out, and say it still, after eighteen centuries : “Never man spake like him.” It will not be needful that we apply the contrast to his apostles and other servants, except indirectly. We will take the classes who have attempted to lead and instruct mankind, without Christ, or in opposition to him. We will first take the contrast these constables had in mind, and compare Christ as a teacher with

I. THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES, whether ancient or modern.

1. *In the spirituality of his instructions.*—The Jewish teachers and their modern imitators are distinguished prominently by their degrading conceptions of religion, morality,

and worship. When the scribe opened the Scriptures, he saw there a vast cumbrous book of court-etiquette ; a description of the dead formalities and proprieties which man must observe in approaching God. He knew nothing of the heart ; the body was with him supreme. Judgment and mercy passed for trifles ; while genuflexions, ablutions, paying tithes, circumcision, and holy sprinklings were supreme. The whole force of Rabbinic learning was expended in splitting hairs of casuistry, and in settling the form of a ceremony ; and the whole power of Rabbinic eloquence was exhausted in enforcing its dead dogmas on the human conscience. But what a teacher is this ! He proclaims to man that the broken heart deplored its sins is the holocaust God accepts ; it is not Gerizim, Moriah, nor the Seven Hills, but the place where a believing heart is praying, where the most acceptable worship is to be performed. It is not the washing of tables nor hands, that can take the place of a pure heart. He proclaims that duty, morality, piety, goodness, greatness, all consist in love to God and man. When he opens the Old Testament, every page glows with heavenly light, every line is instinct with life. God had ordained an outward service. But from the beginning he had sought for spiritual worship. Here the Lord Jesus stood entirely apart from the teachers of the church in his day. He had learned of none of them ; he had derived his authority, his knowledge and power, from none of them.

He differed from the Scribes and Pharisees

2. *In the dignity of his instructions.* — The teaching

of the Rabbis was gravely puerile. Look at their casuistry, and that of their successors, which you may find in the theological standard works, and the guides to confessors, in the Roman church. There is a disgusting detail of analysis and distinction, to which no better name can be given than that of quiddling. Pass from all this to the Sermon on the Mount, and you have passed from a prison to the grand scenery and the invigorating atmosphere of a mountain. Surely never Jew or Gentile had taught as this Teacher that day taught, on that appropriate elevation. Contrast their conceptions of Jehovah with his. Those teachers had invested him with more power than the Jupiter of Paganism possessed. But he was a partial patron of their nation, irrespective of their character and conduct; partaking of their national pride and revenge; relishing their flattering ceremonies, and satisfied with their external homage. But Jesus stood in the midst of them, proclaiming the holiness of God, the certainty of the temporal destruction of Israel, the devastation of the temple, the dispersion of the nation, the introduction of the Gentiles to their privileges; yea, and the personal and eternal damnation of the Jews, unless they repented, and returned to the way of obedience. He revealed the awful unity of God's requirements, the rigor of his justice, and, at the same time, the magnitude of his mercy. He unveiled the sublime mystery of his unity with the Father, and his distinctness from him. He revealed the mystery of the person of the Holy Spirit, the permanent, indwelling Deity in the church.

Their views of the Messiah were low and earthly. He came announcing himself as the Messiah, so great that no earthly titles, or alliances, or palaces, or royal vestments, could add to his greatness. His was the greatness of person, of character, of office, of beneficence. His foe was not Cæsar, but the mightier prince of a mightier empire. His battles were not carnal, but spiritual. His victories were conquests of the heart. His weapons were Truth and Goodness. His deliverance was, from the power and curse of sin. His nation was the human race. His success was the union of the human family under his paternal sceptre. The salvation they proclaimed was political and temporary. He proclaimed himself Lord of Hades, the deliverer from hell, the dispenser of eternal life. Surely no man ever spake like him. Moses promised Canaan to Israel in the wilderness, and his position and teachings were sublime. But what could equal the grandeur of one standing in this wilderness of sin, and pointing to himself as the Saviour of the soul? Jonah was sublime in his solitary walks through the streets of Nineveh, revealing a holy and righteous God to the poor heathen; but a greater than Jonah is here. Solomon was a magnificent prince, and the Queen of Sheba was astonished at his wisdom; but a greater than Solomon is here. Compare, too, the low and limited views of Judaism which the Scribes entertained, with the sublime conceptions Christ revealed of its true genius and design. Mark the delicacy of his position. He was a Jew. He was to fulfil all righteousness,—to sustain the law, and yet to prepare the way to

abrogate it as a form, while its spirit should take on the broad, catholic form of the New Testament. It has been well remarked that “the Pharisees were the Jesuits of Judaism, having all their craft, and all their superstition. In ritual, and priestly assumption, and tyranny, they were to Mosaic Judaism what Ultramontanism is to primitive Christianity. They set aside the weightiest matter of the law for the minutest interest of their hierarchy. They disregarded justice and mercy, and made broad their phylacteries. They devoured widows’ houses, and, for a pretence, made long prayers. Like the disciples of Loyola, they possessed themselves of the secret springs of political and social mechanism. They were a social power, secret, compact, terrible; full of intrigue, turbulence, bloodshed; the most active when they were the least seen; the best servants of the devil when the most saintly. They were found ‘in widows’ houses,’ and at Pilate’s ear; praying in the holy places, and instigating a mob to violence; and they had loaded the generous laws of Moses with innumerable and intolerable traditions and restrictions.” Apart, above, and against this formidable association, armed with all the prestige of position, all the authority of office, and the power of their ill-earned wealth, stood the meek and lowly Jesus; and truly no man ever spake like him when he unveiled their hypocrisy, tore off the gloss of their commentaries, traditions, and enactments; revealing the law of Moses, pure, sublime, benevolent, and typical of better things to come. His great task was, to recover the Mosaic law from the mass of rubbish that

lay upon it, — to reënact it, — to bring men to repentance by the power of its spiritual requirements. And yet he must prepare the way for the great change which his death should accomplish. No man or angel ever before or since has stood in such a position. None ever had such a task to perform. None ever spoke like him. Every word flashed back light on prophecy, history, ceremony, and command, or bore the hearer onward amid the grandest scenes of coming time and eternity. He showed, in all the bloody sacrifices, the one glorious offering of the Lamb of God for the sin of the world. The manna, the brazen serpent, pointed Jew and Gentile to the grandest of all truths for man ; that he who furnishes medicine for the sick, and bread for human nourishment, has provided for the healing and nourishment of the soul to eternal life.

This comparison might be carried much further, to show the contrast between their teaching and his, in regard to the church of the past and of the future, — their anticipations of the progress of religion, and his. We might demand if ever man opened to human view, in a few words, so simple and sublime a view of the judgment day as is recorded by Matthew. Into whose mind had it ever before entered, or who ever uttered it, that the despised Nazarene was to utter his voice, and call up the dead of every nation and generation, to be judged at his bar ? Surely, if we had heard him, we should have said, never man spake like this man.

And if we should make any other contrast between his preaching and that of the Jewish preachers, it would be in

regard to the genial glow of sincerity, sympathy, zeal, and magnanimity, of the one, and the cold, dry, austere dogmatism of the other. Suffice it here to say, no preacher of the Pharisaic school, Jewish or Roman, ever originated an allegory like the story of the Prodigal Son.

Let us now bring on the stage

II. THE POETS.—Many, perhaps the majority, of them would utterly shrink from such a comparison, and complain of it as unfair. To those who borrow their light from the Sun of Righteousness, it would be ungenerous to institute such a contrast. To those, also, who simply seek to indulge their own fancy in composition, or to recreate the wearied mind, and smooth one little path for some toiling traveller, it would be unfair to bring them to such a standard. As well refuse to burn the humble taper in the chamber of the sick, because the sun rose in the morning, as reject these humble contributions to human happiness, because Christ has revealed God, eternity, and salvation, to mankind. But there are admirers of poetry who have a reply to this appeal of the officers; and when asked, “Who ever spake like this man?” their hearts reply, severally, Byron, Shakspeare, Virgil, Horace, Homer. Our reply to this response of theirs would embrace several points.

The teaching of your favorites has no concrete reality, nor anything to meet the deepest wants of the soul.—If they teach history, then they are not poets in the higher sense; and there are always better prose historians than they. So far as they are abstract and philosophic, I will

refer to them under that class. They then draw on fancy for their statements of the past or the future. They add nothing to the stock of human information, the real sum of knowledge. As pure poetry it is concretely unreal. It may be abstractly true. But I am just now judging only by one standard. When you have heard a poet, you learn from him nothing of the past that does not belong to history, nothing of the present that belongs to poetry in particular, nothing of the future that is not taken from Christ or his prophetic pupils. Pure poetry has its place in human cultivation and in civilized life. But it is simply the production of a more active imagination, and a livelier or profounder sensibility than ordinary, sympathizing with man and nature.

But have the poets advanced mankind in knowledge? Which of them? — Homer? Yes; we know some things from him as a historian. But what has he taught to make us holier? Has he lifted the veil that hides from us the Eternal One, the infinite I Am? Has he taught us why we suffer, how we may be forgiven? Has he lifted the veil from the tomb? Has he responded to the deepest, most earnest inquiries of the human soul, as it struggles to pierce the dense black cloud of sin that shuts it in, and hides God, hides the future, hides the path of life? No, he has not a line that is not midnight darkness compared to this one beam of light, “God is a spirit, and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth;” a sentence on which turns the whole religious history of a man, a nation, controlling all its ecclesiastical architecture, its sacerdotal orders, its religious

observances, its sacred days, and its modes of worship. It is the key-note of all iconoclasm, dashing to the earth every idol of the million heathen temples. Has Homer one glimpse of the spirit-world which makes us feel the pulse of sympathy beating quick and tender between earth and heaven, as does this declaration, “there is joy in heaven, before the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth”? Has the range of uninspired poetry one sentence that has been a resting-place for more weary pilgrim-feet, a pillow to more aching heads, a balm to more aching breasts, than this “come unto me, ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”? No; Christ was a doctrinal, not a sentimental preacher. He gave indeed a simple rhythm to his sentences, for truth loves the measures of poetry. He gave poetic aspects of life and nature. He exercised the imagination. But he gave substantial facts, concrete realities, rather than abstract conceptions; truth as addressed to the conscience and the profoundest sensibilities of the soul, adapted to meet its most urgent and most enduring necessities. Never poet spake like this man. O, what eloquence; what sublimity of revelation; what pathos of appeal; what terror of denunciation; what utterances of conscious deity, of divine condescension, of human humility; what consciousness of unity with the Father; what exulting avowals of union with his brethren! Fade, fade, ye flickering tapers; stars, go out in light; the Sun of Righteousness is risen in Time’s deep midnight hour!

Virgil flattered princes. Homer celebrated human heroes and divine villains. Horace enjoyed a good joke, good wine,

and jovial society of well-to-do practical men of common sense, with no extra scruples about a hereafter. Juvenal was keen, honest, useful in clearing some of the filth out of the Augean stable. And I speak here to the disparagement of none of them. Only I particularize their class under the general affirmation, never man spake like this man. We turn now to another class of teachers, to many of whom mankind have listened with great deference. I mean

III. THE PHILOSOPHERS.—Here again I intend not to disparage the labors, attainments, and beneficial influences, of this class of men; but, admitting all that is true concerning them, then to affirm that they never spake like the Son of God. It is of the very essence of philosophy that on subjects of supreme importance it is

1. *Conjectural.*—The philosopher can do nothing more than conjecture in regard to divine existence and religious truths. But in that department we must have sanction and authority absolutely divine; that is, infallible and omnipotent. Christ affirms this; and philosophy, in her ablest expounder, admits it. Christ declares, “No man hath seen God, at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” And Socrates affirms it; he declared after his most earnest and profound reasoning, that he could find no certainty about divine and eternal things; if we are to know God, he must descend to us, for we cannot ascend to him.

Behold, then, one who claims for himself unity with the Father; to have been with the Father from the beginning,

to proclaim the truths for which the wisest and best had sighed and searched. Socrates, the true philosopher, was modest, and put philosophy in its true position. So far as it is the exercise of reason, on its appropriate subjects, it is conclusive, and of great value. But of the world that lies beyond it can reveal no more than prattling infancy. Hear, then, the eternal word proclaim the Father, the immortality of man, the judgment, the resurrection, redemption. When he comes to this world, benighted and bewildered, to teach his creatures, we expect to see a totally different manner from that of the philosophers. Opinions, counsels, conjectures, others may give; he will give doctrines, positive statements of truths unknown, undiscoverable by human research. He can say, "I and my Father are one; I speak nothing without my Father." He affirms, and seldom resorts to logic; never, I believe, except when proving from the Scriptures, unless we consider his parables a form of logic. He always speaks like one having authority; and not as the scribes, or Jewish philosophers. He is the Amen; the faithful and true witness, who testified that he had seen. He did not speculate about the trinity, but he affirmed at once his own distinctness from the Father and the Spirit, and yet the divinity of each. He did not speculate about Satan and the apostate angels, and come to a probable result that they exist; he affirmed it. He did not reason about atonement, regeneration, depravity, eternal damnation; he affirmed them, explained them, urged them. And he differed again

2. *In the concrete form of his teachings from philoso-*

phers. — Of course I refer now not to philosophers who sit at the feet of Jesus. They dare to tell us of a living and eternal person; a being whose spiritual and personal existence is essentially the model of ours. They dare to speak of deity incarnate; God and man in Jesus. How boldly, how sublimely, you may see in Hugh Miller. He terminates one of his recent geological works thus: “There has been no repetition of the dynasty of the fish, of the reptile, of the mammal. The dynasty of the future is to have glorified man for its inhabitant; but it is to be the dynasty, *the kingdom*, not of glorified man made in the image of God, but of God himself in the form of man. In the doctrine of two conjoined natures, human and divine, and in the further doctrine that the terminal dynasty is to be peculiarly the dynasty of him in whom the natures are united, we find that required progression beyond which progress cannot go. We find the point of elevation never to be exceeded meetly coincident with the final period never to be terminated,—the infinite in height harmoniously associated with the eternal in duration. Creation and the Creator meet at one point, and in one person. The long ascending line from dead matter to man has been a progress Godwards; not an asymptotical progress, but destined from the beginning to furnish a point of union, and occupying that point as true God and true man, as creator and created, we recognize the adorable Monarch of all the future !”

That is the teaching of a Christian philosopher; of one of whom Dr. Buckland said, at a meeting of the British

Association, he had never been so much astonished in his life by the powers of any man, as he had been by the geological descriptions of Mr. Miller. That wonderful man described these objects with a facility which made him ashamed of the comparative meagreness and poverty of his own descriptions in the "Bridgewater Treatise," which had cost him hours and days of labor. *He would give his left hand to possess such powers of description as this man;* and, if it pleased Providence to spare his useful life, he, if any one, would certainly render science attractive and popular, and do equal service to theology and geology.

But your pagan philosophers can talk only of abstractions, such as Deity, laws of nature, moral evil, absolute existence. These are very good words in their place; so are humanity, skill, fraud. But they are all abstract; and if you should call a friend of yours humanity, you would deal with him as these philosophers deal with God. God is a concrete, an actual personal existence. Christ speaks of a personal God, a personal devil. God, he says, paints the lilies; it is not laws of nature that do it. Abstract teaching has its place; but, from necessity, it is not practical; and yet a teacher in the great concerns of the soul is, at the same time, a physician. To reason about nosology and therapeutics by the bedside of a man in fever, and do nothing more, is as cruel as it is to mock at disease. Christ was a practical teacher. In religion we need to know what to believe; but preëminently, what to do. He solved the one great problem that has agitated, not the minds of men, so much as their hearts; not

the philosophers alone, but the millions of immortal beings that resorted to pagan temples and Jewish priests, without finding peace. That problem is, What must I do to be saved? He based morality on piety; and the first step into piety is not circuitous and remote, but a simple confidence in what he is, has said, and has done; "this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." This is too brief a consideration of so important a point; but we must leave it to consider one more class;

IV. THE PRETENDERS AND IMPOSTORS.—They are of many grades, and various shades. But they all illustrate the glory of him who spake as never man spake. They all betray their true character, by extravagance, in some form. His claim was the loftiest ever set up on this earth. It was, at the same time, put forth under circumstances which fully tested its genuineness. He always spoke of himself. Everything in his teaching concentrated in himself. He made all the law and the prophets point to him. Here is a pretension that none but God can maintain, without the most satanic arrogance, pride, and blasphemy. On this point there is no middle ground to be taken. Christ is either God, or the chief of apostates and blasphemers. He claims to be God, and yet to be man. Joanna Southcott claimed to have a commission from God. Mohammed pretended he was Allah's chief prophet. Emmanuel Swedenborg, too, claimed to be a special prophet, and the chief prophet; actually setting aside Christ and all others. But Christ claimed to be true and very God, the Son of the Father, and the Son of a virgin

woman. And where and how did he assert these wonderful pretensions ? Among vigilant enemies, at the metropolis, in the temple, among the Rabbis, without patronage or prestige, without armies or princes on his side. He had thundered on Sinai in former days ; and the mountain trembled as he gave forth the law. But now he does not “lift up his voice, nor break a bruised reed.” Let us enter the crowd, and follow his preaching from place to place, and see whether he is a pretender.

1. *An impostor will chiefly address the senses and imaginations of his followers.* — But while the Lord Jesus is constantly crowned with a halo of divine glory, it is a glory manifested mainly to the cool judgment and the spiritual perception of the intelligent inquirer, rather than the vulgar sense and fevered imagination. Popes, cardinals, and Roman and pagan priests, are constantly working on the senses and imaginations of their deluded followers. Look at a recent assemblage of Roman bishops in Baltimore, covered with tinsel and finery. How apart is Jesus sitting on the mount, in his plain robe, from all this foolery and trickery ! How different from the Pharisees, too ! No phylactery, no texts of scripture sewed on the garment; affected dignity and separateness from men. All his dignity was discovered in the awe his character inspired in the wicked, and the admiration it excited in the good. There were prodigies accompanying his birth and his ministry. It must needs be so. God could not tread on the earth, and walk among demons and diseases ; but earth, and demons, and diseases, must give

signs to man that his God and their God was here. There were prodigies; but they caught not the vulgar eye so strongly as they convinced the serious and judicious. Wise men in the east, Simeons and Annas in the temple, humble worshippers in the hill country, saw them. But vulgar Herods and vulgar prelates, and the great hungry mass, saw them not. Prophets, John the forerunner, angels, stars, all combined to announce him. Even Plato has described him, as if inspiration had wandered for a moment to Greece. He spoke of an inspired teacher that should come. He said this teacher must be poor, and void of all qualifications but those of virtue alone. Thus one of the prince of philosophers points mankind, not to a philosopher as their great teacher, but to one whose preëminent quality was his goodness. He said that a wicked world would not bear his instructions and reproofs; and, therefore, within three or four years after he began to preach, he would be persecuted, imprisoned, scourged, and at last be put to death. He performed miracles; but always checked that vulgar enthusiasm they could so readily have aroused. Others have put forth all their real or pretended claims to admiration and confidence as fast and as far as possible. His exhibition of himself is marked with an unaffected divine reserve, which manifests the purpose of planting an eternal kingdom in the understanding and heart of man. The witnesses of his miracles are forbidden to be clamorous in announcing them. His whole manner shows the desire of a calm winning of men's intelligent confidence, and of their sympathy and gratitude to a

suffering benefactor. He combined authority with gentleness, as man cannot do. He combined human with divine authority. As man, he spake like Elijah, Noah, Moses ; with the awful majesty and severity of Ezekiel he uttered on Scribes and Pharisees denunciations the most terrible. Did ever the fiery Ezekiel or the rude shepherd of Tekoa speak like this man, when he sat at the Pharisee's table and cried out, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them. The blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world shall be required of this generation." Did ever the tender pathos of Jeremiah equal his when he wept over Jerusalem ? All the beauty and power of the prophetic race met in him ; so that as a man no one of them ever spake like him. But when he said, "I am the Son of God; before Abraham was, I am !" then he spake as mere men could not speak. When he said, "I am the bread of life; I am the resurrection and the life; I give the water of life; I give the weary rest; I am Israel's shepherd, laying down my life for the sheep," then he speaks as neither man nor angel can speak. He aimed to secure boundless love to himself; all the love that God can claim. Here all comparison and even contrast fails. "Alexander and I," exclaimed Napoleon, "have set up the empire of force; but Jesus Christ established the enduring empire of love." And when you see the pure and undying power of his words, you must exclaim, "Never man spake like him." They converted Saul of Tarsus ; they converted the rude Gauls that invaded the Roman

empire. They made the Reformation; which is the well-spring of modern civilization. They have created modern society. They bind the hearts of men to law, to order, to society; to freedom, to truth, to man, to God. They are mightier than all law, than all philosophy, than all religious theories, than armies, than princes, popes, or devil. They made the noblest body of men England ever saw. They made the feeble mightier than royal tyrants. They convey to man's heart the omnipotence that rules not matter, but the soul,—the omnipotence of divine love. If these are not the words of an eternal, almighty being, then they must die; and all that is built on them must perish. But they are the words of life to the soul, to the church, to the nations. Christ saw the glory of his own kingdom. But what quietness and reserve in announcing it! Everything is said to give a basis to an intelligent faith; nothing to create worldly enthusiasm. Impostors resort to prejudices, national or religious. Peter the Hermit ranted and raved; and all Europe was moved by it, because he aroused a worldly prejudice against the Saracen, and a fanatical zeal for holy places. How easy it would have been, when that multitude were shouting hosannas, and strewing their garments under his feet, to lift the trumpet to his lips, and cry, "To arms; rescue the desecrated temple of Israel's God; lift Judah's banner over the Roman eagle!" But not an appeal to passion or prejudice, not a word of flattery, does he utter. He promises the cross here, and heaven hereafter. He wins no golden opinions by proclaiming indiscriminate salvation, as so many have done in his name. He

describes no sensuous heaven, like Swedenborg's; no sensual heaven, like Mohammed's; but a heaven for which nothing qualifies us, without purity of heart.

How precious and indispensable a study are the four gospels! — They contain the earthly history of this wonderful being. They contain a few of the wonderful words he uttered; enough to complete our education for earth and heaven. These words will bear a more profound investigation, a more intense meditation; they will last us longer, they will do us infinitely more service, than all the poets, philosophers, and religious teachers, of Adam's race. Study them. Keep them.

We see why the whole New Testament is of binding authority. — One of Christ's promises was, that when he had done the great work of atonement, his Spirit should descend on his disciples, to secure a completeness to the revelation of his grace. They have not an idea of which we cannot find the germ in his words. But the expansion and application of them needed his infallible Spirit to secure its freedom from error.

The words of Christ will fix our destiny. — If we believe them, and trust him, we are saved; if we believe them not, we are damned. Other books, then, we may read and criticize. To the Scriptures we must bow the entire soul, with all its faculties. We shall have reached the highest degree of wisdom and of taste, when we shall see more beauty and glory, shall taste more sweetness, and feel more power, in the words that fell from his lips, than in any and all other words.

V I.

JESUS, THE GREAT MISSIONARY.

"*For, the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*" — Luke 19 : 10.

THE meaning of that word — *lost* — is the separating-point from which diverge the most important sentiments that divide the nominally Christian world. It affects essentially all our religious sentiments, character, and career.

The fundamental error on this point respects two aspects of human nature — man as the subject of law; and man in his capacity for a spiritual life.

The views of man's guilt and ill-desert entertained by some are comparatively slight. They hold in abhorrence only certain crimes against civil laws and social order. They excite and they allow no deep and heart-breaking convictions for spiritual offences; they arouse no fears of endless punishment. They go to the negleeter of religion, and persuade him to become more attentive to religious truths and duties. They go to the pagan, and urge him to embrace a purer rite, a more rational theology. Their appeals are not made to the conscience, to start it from deep slumbers, and

make it echo the thunders of coming judgment. And when they find it awakened, they proclaim to it no peace-speaking sacrifice for sin ; in fact, they censure this very alarm, and attribute it to ignorance and error. Hence they find nothing in man's prospects to enlist deeply their own solicitude. Hence they accord not with us in our endeavors to awaken a slumbering world by strong appeals to make it hear the voice of an insulted Deity, of an outraged Father, of the threatening majesty of heaven.

Thus we differ from them in our estimate of the extent and purity of the precepts of the divine law. We consider all the world as its guilty violators. Equally antipathetic are our views of man's spiritual character. We believe that the spiritual image of God is effaced from the human soul ; man is fallen, terribly, desperately fallen ; the gold has lost its lustre. All men are wanderers from the home of the soul, the bosom of God ; and they must all be persuaded to return. The malady of sin lies deeply fixed in the immortal part, the soul ; and, therefore, intellectual elevation and social refinement do not remove it, and have no tendency to remove it. We regard the Gospel applied by God's Spirit as the sole remedy.

Are we right in our views ? We are willing to ask ; and wait candidly for the reply to these questions : How must I regard human nature, myself, and my fellow-men ? What is my highest duty with respect to my immortal self, and what with respect to my fellow-men ? We desire truth, and only truth. We desire to see things now, as far as practica-

ble, as we shall see them, when the illusions of time shall have given place to the light of eternity. We have also a desire to vindicate our course to an intelligent world; and, if we are right, to become in our turn the reproofers of its unbelieving indifference.

Brethren, we spend this tender and sacred hour in contemplating, devoutly,

JESUS, THE GREAT MISSIONARY.

He is the Judge that ends the strife. He is the Logos, the Truth. All his views were truth, all his sentiments righteousness. There was, even in his finite human nature, no error in theory, no misapprehension of facts, no exaggerated impulse, no passion. He says he came to seek and to save that which is lost. That looks to us like calling himself the Great Missionary, the Pattern of all missionaries, the Founder of our missionary institutions. We go forth to seek and to save that which is lost; and we believe that our views and our course are an imitation of his, and an obedience to his last command, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

We propose, then, to examine the meaning of the term "lost," as here employed, by the views which Jesus entertained of men, and by his conduct toward them. By

I. HIS ESTIMATE OF MAN.—What extent of meaning did he attach to the term "lost"?

1. *He regarded man as a depraved and apostate spirit.*—Depraved and apostate are relative terms, referring to a

certain standard of perfection and excellence. Man was made for great moral purposes, to conform to a type of perfect excellence, to attain great heights of moral elevation. Such was, in fact, the original, native tendency of his constitution. And there is his dignity. Now, if the Saviour considered the present state of man as conformed to that type, then he did not regard him as depraved and apostate. And happily we are left to no conjectures here. His ideas of holiness are seen in his own character and actions ; of which it might be enough here to say, that all men consider them perfect, and yet totally unlike those of any other man.

Now, whom did Jesus regard as possessing that spiritual life which consists in rising above created good, to live in God, to feast on his smile, and breathe the atmosphere of his love ? Was it the poor idolater of the surrounding pagan tribes ? Was it the proud, sanctimonious Pharisee, inwardly full of putrefaction as the grave ? Was it the infidel, sensual Sadducee, who ridiculed all pretensions to spiritual communion ? Was it the crowd who followed him, not for truth and spiritual aliment, but for bread ? Was it the rich young ruler, so amiable, so pure, so sincere, who went away sorrowful when he learned that God and Mammon cannot be loved and served together ? Nay, was it the half-converted Peter, whom he rebuked as fearing, in the spirit of Satan, the sacrifice of self ? Or John and James, who then looked, in serving God, for the honors of a temporal kingdom ? Was it, in a word, the being, of whom it is recorded, that Jesus “ knew

what was in man," and therefore trusted not himself to him ? O, no ! the Son of God walked like a living man among the tombs ; and the silence of the second death had reigned there forever, if his own omnipotent voice had not cried, " Lazarus, come forth."

We have another exhibition of the Saviour's views of what constitutes the spiritual life, in his benedictions. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, the pure in heart, the peace-makers, they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, they who love him more than parents and possessions ; nay, that forsake all things, even life itself, for his sake and the Gospel's." Now, can we believe that he considered mankind generally in his day, or that he considers the men of this or any other period, as pure in heart, peace-makers, seeking spiritual good with an eagerness like that of the corporeal appetites ; seeking their rest in God, as the weary body seeks its couch ; longing for God, as the hunted hart pants for the water-brook, or as the shipwrecked mariner longs for morning light ?

Our Saviour again presents the standard of human excellence : "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself." And did he think that idolaters, the profane, the neglecters of God's service, those who love pleasure more than God, the proud, the covetous, the sensual—did he believe that they were good, when compared with that standard, Thou shalt love God supremely and perfectly ? Or the envious, ambitious, fraudulent, cruel, tyrannical, impure, slanderers ? Do they

love others as themselves ? Do they in India, Africa, Europe, America ? Did they in any part or age of the world ? Ask history. It is, indeed, too generally the record of the powerful. But it shows what all would do, if their circumstances permitted. And have the powerful been good ? Have their lives been examples of piety ? Have their energies been consecrated to the public welfare ? There has been a Cyrus, an Aristides, a Joshua, a St. Louis, an Alfred. But they are the exceptions. The history of kingdoms is a record of wars and their horrors, of frauds and oppressions. What says the social state of mankind ? Let the condition of woman speak in all the lands where human nature has acted out its unobstructed tendencies. What is a Turkish wife, an Indian mother, a Hindoo widow ? Come home, then, to the criminal codes, and criminal courts, and criminal establishments, of Christian America. Leave the poetry of the parlor ; lay down that enchanting book which enraptures you with its visions of human dignity and loveliness ; leave that circle of refinement, where a favored few have separated themselves from the vulgar, to enjoy a higher intellectual and social life, and come with me out among the mass of this moving population. Let us go into the lanes and alleys, the almshouses, the hospitals, the prisons. Shrink not, admirer of human nature ; this is man, godlike man. Do you know that thousands of the very children of this city are liars, thieves, impure, profane ? And what of the pagan world ? O, let the missionary tell you, who, having gone out to make common interest with the heathen, has examined deeply into

his character. Here are nearly five hundred millions; and yet the portrait in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans remains fearfully accurate. And does this being, man, remain as he was, when, coming pure and perfect from his Creator's hands, he was pronounced very good? And what commission have diseases and death in this fair world? Did God make man for this? *You* must say, Yes. The Bible says, "By *sin*, death entered into the world; and so death passed upon all men, for that *all* have sinned." Each breath you draw marks the death of three of your race. No place is so exalted, none so sacred, that disease cannot invade it. No tie is so tender and so precious that death will spare it. And when you visit the burial-yard, ask whether man is as God made him! Was he made to be the slave of Satan, the sport of tempests, and the prey of death? Was he made for poverty and filth, for rags and woe? O, no! he is fallen. The race is fallen. If we want another test, we have it in the pure worship which Jesus rendered the Father. Place this by the side of human religions. The greater part of them are bloody, and seem to have preserved the tradition that "without shedding of blood is no remission" of sins. But they are also impure, and thus declare the deep apostasy of man, when his very religions remove him further from God and holiness. If he makes a Jupiter, he is a monster of lust; a Mars, he drives his chariot over the dying; a Mercury, he is chief of robbers; a Juggernaut, he feasts on mangled human limbs. And when a pure revelation is given to him first in a single nation, he turns back-

ward ever towards idolatry ; and when Christianity is given to the nations, they pervert and pervert it, until, of the two hundred and fifty millions who possess it, one hundred and ninety millions are sunk in superstition and idolatry little better than paganism itself. The moral condition of France and Spain and Italy, the history of religious persecutions conducted in the name of Jesus Christ, and as the expansion of his Spirit and as obedience to his precepts, appear to us sad confirmations of the truth of our view, that man is lost, because he is a depraved and apostate creature.

We learn again our Saviour's estimate of men, in the direct expression of his views. Hear him declare : " Broad is the road that leadeth to destruction, and *many* go in thereat, while narrow is the way that leadeth to life, and *few* there be that find it. If any man will come after me, let him" — what ? cultivate his good heart? — No, " deny himself." And in how many ways does he describe us as poor, and miserable, and blind, and sick, and weary, burdened, imprisoned, enslaved, dead, exposed to endless destruction ! If not sick, we have no need of him ; if not sinners, he has no message to us, for "they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." In his conversation with Nicodemus, he says that we must be regenerated ; and that whoever is not, cannot be saved. And mark his emphatic reason : "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." By our natural birth, we inherit only that which cannot inherit heaven. In the natural birth there is a terrible entailment of degeneracy ; and so there needs a supernatural birth, a

birth of the Spirit. With all this in view, it is impossible to believe that Jesus regarded man as a refined, noble, elevated being, — as, in his present state, the type of perfection. He never says it, he never intimates it. We look in vain for passages in all his addresses, as well as in all the writings of his disciples, to find a language or a sentiment like that which we constantly hear about the purity, and nobleness, and virtue, of man.

2. He regarded man, also, as a condemned criminal. — According to his saying to Nicodemus, “He that believeth not is condemned already.” This was said in connection with a comparison of man’s moral condition to the physical state of the Israelites who were bitten by the fiery serpents. They, says the Saviour, were to be healed by looking at the uplifted symbol of God’s righteous judgments against their sins. So we, who are dying beneath the righteous anger of God, are to be healed by believing on him who was lifted up for us on the accursed tree. But whoever believes not remains in his state of condemnation. This condemnation includes two facts, — that of being left in transgression, and that of being subjected to punishment. Jesus did regard men as sinners. But our ideas of sin are superficial and unimpressive; those of Jesus were deep and awful. He traced each outward sin to the heart, the fountain of spiritual death; and he detected sin in the heart where no outward sign was given to man; and he showed that it were better to lose limb and life, reputation, and each dear interest of earth, rather than to remain a sinner; for sin is the transgression

of the law, — of God's holy law. And not only has sin taken possession of the heart of man, but, without supernatural aid, that possession must be indefinitely permanent. There is no tendency in human depravity toward self-recovery and perfection. In all that we have known of it, its course is ever downward, downward, and forever downward. Sin never yet exhausted itself in this world, nor in one heart. Every instance of recovery from its dominion is called by Jesus the conquest of a strong man armed by a stronger than he. And while man is thus a sinner, a transgressor of law, he is exposed to eternal death. If the warnings and expositations of Christ do not teach that, then they are to us without meaning. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin, and to thee, Bethsaida; for it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrah, than for you! And thou, Capernaum, exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell! 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? There shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." Dives, after death, "lifted up his eyes in hell, being tormented." The net and fishes, the wise and foolish virgins, the wheat and tares, the separation of the sheep and goats, the treatment of the unfaithful steward, all tell us what he believes concerning man's eternal destiny. But nothing he uttered is more terrible than the declaration that he himself will say, at last, to the wicked, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!" Men may close their ears and shut their eyes to

this, but it is the word of God. Men may refuse to hear it; but there it stands, a yet unfulfilled prophecy, made, if possible, more certain to us by the past fulfilment of the others which surround it. Yes, as certain as was the destruction of Babylon and Tyre, the deluge of water and the flood of fire on a guilty world, — as certain and as terrible as was the destruction of Jerusalem, — will be the utterance and execution of those terrific words. And as idle and impotent will be the scoffs and self-reasonings of this day as were those of that day to arrest the judgments of God. But who can measure their meaning? “*Cursed!*” It is terrible to be cursed by a man, a wicked man, without cause; but to be cursed by a Father, — by a being who never errs in judgment; a being who never condemns unjustly; a being who suffered to save us; a being who has long expostulated in view of this very judgment; a being who commands the elements of the universe to execute his purposes, — a being who ranks his glorious perfections to flash conviction to the centre of my guilty conscience !

The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which is lost, — lost to God, to itself, to heaven, to hope, to purity, and peace, and love, — lost forever. I have said that we have more exalted views of man than either the sceptic or semi-sceptic philosophy contain. We have. We believe in his original dignity; and we have such views of that, that man, in his present state, is a source of constant distress to us; and we desire perpetually to be proclaiming in his hearing the dignity he has lost. We would say perpetually to him,

as we should to the degenerate descendant of a noble family, still wearing their name and title, and even imitating their lofty bearing, "Shame, shame on thee! Thy name, thy palace, thy lordly mien, are all thy reproach!" We have such exalted views, also, of the perfectibility of man, that we cannot endure to see the world contenting itself with anything short of the image of God, and of perfect communion with him. Man was a noble being when God said of him, "He is good." But he aspired too high. He tried to become a centre of light, and strength, and happiness, to himself, and to be independent of God. He withdrew from God's spiritual dominion, and God abandoned his spiritual nature to itself, and made him, in his wretchedness, a spectacle to himself and to the universe. The brute creation have fled him, for he has become their enemy. The very earth has felt the blighting curse that lighted on him. He was chased from Eden's happy garden; and the cherub sentry, with flaming sword, still stands to bar his return. Happy Eden, scene of our sweet communion with God! — happy Eden, witness of our dignity and of our blessedness! — thou art lost to us, and we to thee! My brethren, we are strong and high believers in the dignity of human nature; no man shall deprive us of this our boasting; yet, not in human nature as it is, but as it was, and as, by grace, it may become. But, as he is, man is lost. And we want to sit down by the side of every brother of the human race, and weep with him for the crown which is fallen from our brow, the home and the heaven which we have lost. We want to

undo the deceiving of his pride, and sigh and pray with him for the recovery of our birthright.

But are the heathen, who have not our light, exposed to perdition? A careless world, unwilling to make thorough inquiry into the condition and prospects of other men, complacently wraps itself in the mantle of an imagined charity, and says, "The mercy of God will never consign them to endless punishment, when they have sincerely done their best according to the light they enjoy." And there, indeed, we are agreed with the world; but we are forced to stop there, for we have too many proofs that there are few of them who will have that plea. We find, also, a part of the church, though unable to hope much for the pagan world, yet unwilling to adopt the harsh conclusion that these hundreds of millions are rushing blindly to endless ruin, and preferring to rest in a vague hope that it will not be so, rather than to search the Scriptures, to ascertain if God has given us any instruction on the subject, and imposed upon us any responsibility in the matter. Here we shall fail of time for a solemn topic. The sneers of the world terrify us not in such a matter. The charge of cruelty troubles not our conscience, while we seek not to make their destruction a fact, but to ascertain whether they are really exposed to destruction, in order that we may aid them to escape it. Indeed, if we were not distrustful of our own imperfect motives, we should say that ours is the true charity, which welcomes evidence, though it bring us to the results of distressing sympathy and of self-denying labor. We are inclined to

suspect the depth of that charity which, to save its possessor pain, and spare him labor, settles a great principle of the divine government, a great future fact, not by examining God's testimony, but by appealing to a mere human sensibility. If we consult our sympathies, we say, "The poor pagans will not go to a miserable eternity, but where they will go we know not." But when we ask, "What has God asserted on this subject?" we rise from the answer with heavy hearts. The cry of the perishing then swells on our ear, — "Come over and help us!" — until we wish for a thousand tongues to proclaim to them the way of life. An outline of God's testimony is all we can here present. If we examine their lives, considered in the light of a disciplinary, probationary, or preparatory state, we cannot believe that they go to heaven. They, as well as we, must be regenerated, and that in this world. But we find them, as in Paul's day, infanticides, liars, adulterers, covenant-breakers, bestial, sensual, devilish, murderers of mothers. All this seems to us a preparation, not for heaven, but for perdition. We find them, too, just what the Canaanites were, whom God, in his anger, swept from the earth, but surely not into heaven. They are idolaters, if there ever were any, and God declares that such cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Again, to believe that they are in the way to heaven is to regard all the apostles' anxieties and labor for their salvation as unfounded, extravagant, and useless. And, again, the apostle has fully reasoned out the case in two places. In the one he shows that they sin against their light

as we do against ours; in the other, this is his missionary argument: "For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. But how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how hear without preachers? and how preach unless *sent*?" No, my brethren; it may be natural sympathy, or it may be distrust of God's testimony, which says, "Let the heathen alone," but it is not enlightened piety. Then we are right in our estimate of man; then we should not be dazzled by his external appendages, his intellectual and social traits; then we may say to the higher and lower Deistic philosophies: Your boast is vain when you claim the exclusive admiration of human nature, for we have higher views than either of you. You would satisfy man with certain social excellences, certain pagan virtues, certain moral sentiments, which have little or no reference to God; but we believe that man was made to live in God, and to reflect his image to the universe. We hold, too, the key that unlocks the deep mystery of man's present condition. A writer of your school says, "I resemble, O Lord, the night-globe, which, in the obscure path where thy finger leads it, reflects from the one side eternal light, and, on the other, is plunged in mortal shades." "How abject, how august," says one of another school, "how complicate, how wonderful, is man!" There is something great in man, and something abject. To us the mystery is solved. Man was great, good, godlike, in his powers and in his character; but he is fallen in character, and, in that fall,

has dragged down his powers and native sentiments; leaving, like a volcanic rupture, fragments of an Eden, scattered flowers that live here an exotic life.

We shall now consider, much more briefly, Jesus as our pattern,

II. IN HIS TREATMENT OF MEN.—We see in what light he regarded man; and how his holy soul was moved with compassion towards him. We now demand, what did his compassion lead him to do? If to make great sacrifices, then his views of man's lost estate must have been very strong; for, although it may be love, it is also foolish love that makes a greater sacrifice and effort for another than his necessities demand. But when a being of infinite intelligence makes great sacrifices, greater than we are capable of estimating, the evidence is complete, that the misery threatening or actually affecting those whom he aids is equally immeasurable by us. On the subject of the condescension and sacrifices of the Lord Jesus Christ, the language of the Bible is deep, mystic, suggestive. He had a glory with the Father before the world was, but he *left* it. What was that glory? we inquire; where and how did he leave it in becoming a man? The veil of flesh hides it from our sight. He was rich; when, where, in what? The clouds and darkness of an infinite majesty rest around his person, and hide from feeble mortals the splendors of his primitive empire. But he became poor. He took on him or was invested with flesh. Then he was, before he was flesh; he was before Abraham; he was David's root and lord, before he was his offspring and

successor. Mysterious language ! He took on him, at the very instant when angels were adoring him as the only-begotten of the Father, the form of a servant; and came to be despised and rejected, to hear hisses and taunts and blasphemies, instead of hosannas and hallelujahs. He exchanged heaven's diadem for Judea's thorns, and the robes of light for Pilate's faded and discarded garment; he forsook the palace, where he was sovereign, for the judgment-hall, where he was bound, and buffeted, and scourged, and condemned. He left his body-guard of holy and mighty angels, to be at the mercy of wicked and puny mortals who hated him. He was the Lord of the universe, but he was born of one of the lowliest inhabitants of earth's obscurest corner. He was Prince of life, but he tasted death for every man. This the Scriptures call his sacrifice for man's salvation. But they make all this the lightest feature of the image of his cross. When they would start our imaginations on the path to his expiatory sufferings, they drop a few phrases, which are not so much intended to instruct as to impress and overwhelm us with godly fear and sympathy. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful; even unto death." What made him sorrowful—so sorrowful ? Nothing in all that was external around him there; nothing that the Evangelists mention. Again; in the garden his bodily frame passes through an unparalleled excitement of agony; but from no apparently adequate cause. To attribute it to his fear of crucifixion, or to sorrow for his cause and friends, betrays the most entire disrespect. Again; his agonizing cry, Why hast

thou forsaken me? permits us to conjecture that there is something in what the Son of God endured in our stead and for our salvation, which we may understand only when our intellectual powers shall be expanded by the light, and our moral powers purified by the love of heaven. And when Jesus said, with emphasis, "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son," we understand that this gift was so costly, and there was in some way such an expenditure and sacrifice, that it not only showed God's love to man more clearly than all else he had ever said or done, but also that it shows the immensity of that love. And so, when the apostle reasons for the encouragement of faith, "If God spared not his own Son," we understand that this not sparing, and freely giving up, involve something which we are now incapable of comprehending, but by which God designs to affect our hearts and form our characters more powerfully than by all his words or works. If the understanding of any man forbids the flow of emotion until this veil is removed, then his heart will never feel fully in this life what Paul felt when he said, "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that if one died for all, then were all dead." We were all dead, and he died for the dead; and, in dying, he showed his conviction of our state of spiritual death.

But we have done with proofs of man's apostate and ruined state. It is to us a fact. The Word of God declares it, and also another fact which rests on all this gloomy cloud, a rainbow-truth, "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save

that which was lost." O, then, ye scoffing economists, let us hear no more your severe reproofs of our poor expenditures of property in the missionary cause. Jesus is the master whom we follow, though at too great a distance; Jesus is the model we imitate, though very imperfectly. O, then, covetous, selfish professors of Christ's Gospel, imbibe his spirit, and live and labor and expend for the recovery of the lost. Brethren, I must rise now from the attitude of defence, and turn and charge on this practical indifference, and on this sceptical philosophy, positive guilt. Had the Bible contained its present amount of wisdom, but on some of men's temporal interests; had it determined the great questions of finance; how eagerly would they read it, how cordially believe it! Now, as a spiritual book, the one class disregard it, and the other look at it as full of exaggerations. Yet they should remember that this is the only volume in human language which God has condescended to write. And should it not contain deep, high, wondrous things? Is not this one of its very marks and seals? The Bible is full of paradoxes; because it shows us only fragments of truths, the full magnitude and harmony of which we cannot now comprehend. God knows two things which we do not know, and therefore does two things which we would not do. He knows the demerit of sin, and therefore threatens it with everlasting punishment. He knows the value of the soul, and therefore gives his Son for its redemption. Ye that despise this rich gift; ye that despise us for our efforts to proclaim its story to the world; let me say to you in God's name, Ye have a

double guilt, and must meet a two-fold condemnation. You believe not, and therefore are condemned already. You also rob the world of its hope. Your theories and your practice would leave mankind in a hopeless condition. You dash from the trembling hand of perishing man the lamp of life, the cup of salvation; you shatter in pieces the only bark to which poor human nature can commit its hopes for eternity! What have you proved, fellow-man? At best a negative. You have begun and ended with denying. You would prevent our going to probe man's moral wound, and administer God's efficacious remedy. If one finds himself the slave of passion, if his conscience condemns him, if he fears that there possibly may be an hour of retribution and an eternity of wretchedness just beyond the confines of life, what can you say to this troubled spirit? You can sneer; but can you console? You can reason; but can you suppress the instinctive solicitude for a sure and solid hope of immortal blessedness? To amuse man with theories, but to leave darkness on this chief point of all his solicitude, is the glory of anti-scriptural philosophy. Just where man most wants light, it is darkness. And just there the Bible pours the effulgence of eternal day. And not to hail that light, not to spread it, is treason to God's mercy, treason to our sacred trust, treason to man's highest interests.

But let me turn a moment, in closing, to you, my dear brother, on this momentous hour of your life, when you are come to receive from Jesus, by the hands of his unworthy

servants, the investment of this highest office confided to man. Let me say to you :

That deep compassion for men should characterize the whole spirit of the missionary, and of missionary work.

Go to the benighted, with as glad a heart as animated the angels when they were commissioned to announce the glad tidings of Heaven's great mission of love. When your feet shall touch the shores of that distant land, sing, in the fulness of your spirit, Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will to man. Be touched, like your High Priest, with a feeling of their infirmities. Dwell in your thoughts on their lost estate ; see them as the great Shepherd did, wandering from the fold ; until your heart bleeds and breaks with pity. This will animate and sustain you amid difficulties. You can bear them for the sake of the miserable ; for yours will then be pity tender and sustaining, like that of the patient mother by the couch of her suffering child. This will make you gentle and forbearing and patient, even with a mother's tenderness, and keep you from crushing the bruised reed, or quenching the faintly-kindled wick. This will speak in heavenly eloquence from your very countenance, and melt the gates of brass in the hard heart of man. This will give you errands to the mercy-seat, and arguments before it. This will nerve you to your work, when a relaxing climate would tend to unnerve you. This will be treading in the footsteps of the Great Missionary.

Let me say again — That the example of Christ is the missionary's encouragement. You leave all for those you

would save ; so did he. You mean to identify yourself with them in everything but sin,— to bear their infirmities, and share their sorrows ; so did he. You are acting on the great principle that, to save from overflowing evil, the good of the universe must be diffused, not concentrated ; so did he. You are going *to* men, and not waiting for them to come to you ; so did he. You are going to seek and to save that which is lost, according to the measure imparted to you of the Father ; so did he. And you are not only laboring like Christ, but also for him and with him. He is seeking these very souls. He once did it in person. Now he does it by his Spirit, and by his people. But his interest is no less now than when his sacred feet were traversing the land which your feet shall traverse, to save the perishing sheep of Israel's fold. You are going like him to pray in Gethsemane ; but he spares your ascent to Golgotha and the tree. Go, dear brother, moisten with your tears for man the soil which he moistened when he thought of the lost. Go, assured not only that you are seeking them for Christ, but that he is seeking them by you and with you. Urge that much, and with much faith in your prayers ; it will prevail for many a blessing.

Let us conclude by saying — That persuasion to believe in Christ is the missionary's great work. To effect this, he must commend himself to the conscience. Through an awakened conscience, man learns his need of Christ. Go, then, dear brother, speak to the sleeping conscience of man. Let not your attention be fixed upon his peculiarities, his specific qualities as an individual man, or his more general

features of national character, his theories of philosophy and religion ; but meet him as a man, as a lost man ; nay, as one that knows he is lost. If your attention is drawn only or chiefly to his corporeal miseries, his social degradation, his intellectual privations, you will incur the danger of diverting his and your attention from that which should arouse your profounder sympathies, and all his slumbering energies of conscience. You must, indeed, attempt the amelioration of his intellectual and social state ; but guard vigilantly against letting either your or his anxieties and efforts terminate there. When you have to meet him as the philosopher of another school, you may be discouraged at the sincerity and obstinacy, nay, perhaps, plausibility, with which he can confront you. But, when you meet him in the winning strength of a deep sympathy,—you, the lost and recovered, him, the lost and perishing man,—then you are in your strongest attitude, he is in his most defenceless. The missionary must speak from deep experience to the consciousness of guilt often stifled, never annihilated, in the impenitent bosom ; to a conscience often stifled, often cheated, never tranquillized, by his vain superstitions. Speak, my brother ; now in thunder, now in the still small voice. So God speaks in nature and in grace. Man will understand you, when you whisper to his conscience. Yet you may awaken resistance. The light is painful to them that love darkness. And false philosophy, and false religion, and practical unbelief, will all be resorted to, to shield the conscience. And yet your great work is to bring home on the soul of each man

the conviction that he is lost. Trouble yourself little, and others still less, with theories of human depravity. Whatever else they do, they do not awaken the conscience ; and, if I mistake not, more of them have lulled than have awakened it. The facts of depravity and conscience are two of the ultimate facts, to be taken as theological axioms. God has not proved the existence of either, but simply asserted it. And so may we ; both on his testimony, and on men's very consciousness. Perhaps one of the mightiest elements of ministerial power is the deep conviction on the soul of the lost condition of man. It must give fervor and frequency to prayer, and tend greatly to produce conviction in others. Your hearer may be proud and powerful in his philosophy, he may be self-complacent in his creed and ceremonies. But whisper to his soul of seasons of shame, and self-reproach, and fear, which forebode impending doom, and he cannot deny, he cannot argue ; for he feels that he is dealing with truth and with God. In your public addresses deal with the conscience, and you will imitate the greatest preachers. Study the sermons of Elijah to Ahab, of Nathan to David, of Peter to the thousands at Jerusalem, of Paul to Felix. There you find no flattery of human nature, no general descriptions of virtue ; but guilt and condemnation described as pertaining to them all. Feel that man is lost ; that guilt and condemnation and spiritual poverty belong to every child of Adam. Proclaim that on the house-top and in the closet. Man may not have thought of it ; but, when you suggest it, he sees that it is truth. Give him exalted views of human

dignity and worth, not as it is, but as it was and may be. Solve the strange perplexity of every man's experience ; tell him what you know of former conflicts and present conquests ; of noble aspirations after heaven, and sordid attachments to earth ; of desires to please God, and determinations to please self. Speak to his love of happiness; he will understand you. And, as you solve the mystery to his astonished soul, as you describe the symptoms of his spiritual malady, as you point him to the balm of Gilead, and the great Physician, a new life of hope may begin to infuse itself into his soul. Again, I say, your great employment is to bring the individual souls of men to Christ. Be not diverted from this ; be not satisfied short of success in this. If you must do other things, consider them collateral and subordinate to this. Your glorious commission is, to seek and save the lost. Be filled, be fired with the spirit of that commission. May you, and may the church, and all of us who announce the Gospel, be more and more filled with that glorious object—the recovering to immortal spirits the lost image of God, and guiding the perishing to an almighty Saviour. May the Spirit be poured from on high, until the whole church sees and feels that these facts are now of chief importance—man is lost, and the Son of God is seeking him ; man is lost, and the Son of God is come to save him ; man is lost, and the church is commissioned to go forth in the might of faith and prayer to his salvation. *To save the lost !* To-night we talk of it, as children talk of the affairs of empires ; we see through a glass darkly ; our conceptions are low and limited.

To save the lost ! Tell us, ye damned spirits, what it means ! Tell us, Son of God, what it means ; what stirred thy soul in godlike compassion to seek the lost ! Tell us, ye ransomed and ye faithful spirits who never sinned — tell us, eternity — what is this mighty work of Gospel-missions ! Tell us, O Father, tell thy churches, tell thy ministers ; until every slumberer awake, every energy be aroused, and the way of life be pointed out to a perishing race !

VII.

OUR SANCTIFICATION.

"This is the will of God, even your sanctification." — 1 Thess. 4: 3.

HERE is a peculiar feature of the Scriptures; they contain the vastest truths shut up in brief, simple sentences. In this one word, sanctification, is embraced a fact which transcends all our conceptions; which concerns us more intimately than our health, our honors, our position, our possessions, our attainments in knowledge, and all upon which the heart of the world is most earnestly set. It concerns us little where we are, what we possess, what others think us to be; but what we are is a matter of infinite moment. It includes more than the restoration of the primitive image of God in our spirits; it is a confirmation in perfect holiness forever.

And it is here affirmed that God is not indifferent to us; and that what he prefers to all things for us is, that we become perfectly holy.

To get this momentous truth before our minds, we may meditate on the intrinsic evidence of it, and on the positive manifestation God has made of this feeling. We contemplate

I. THE INTRINSIC EVIDENCE OF THE FACT THAT GOD DESIRES OUR SANCTIFICATION.—This is a form of evidence which springs directly from contemplating the nature of sanctification, as regarded by a being of perfect holiness and kindness.

1. *Sanctification is the restoration of that which was ruined by the apostasy.*—God is not the God of confusion, but of order. He made man upright, and in his own image. Nothing has grieved and offended him like the apostasy of angels and men. His work was marred; his purposes of goodness were defeated. If it were, then, only to bring back things to the primitive order, when he pronounced them very good, it is in his view most desirable that man should be made holy. We might never have dared to believe this, did not God affirm it. But now that he does, the reasonableness and naturalness of it appears very clear. We do not wish to see a bird with a broken wing, a ship dismasted, a man dumb or blind, or a machine out of order. And it delights us when we see them restored to their natural state. So God delights in a restoration to the primitive moral order.

2. *Sanctification is the complete reconciliation of man to God.*—He does not fear our enmity, but it is not agreeable to him. As a lover of order, he must be pleased to see man reconciled to that pure and perfect order he has established. Sin is a quarrel with God's arrangements. Creation, providence, law, yea, God himself, are all contrary to our taste and wishes, just so far as we are sinners. But sanctification is a return to a perfect harmony with God and

his government, his providence and his works. And it must delight him who is himself in perfect harmony with everything but sin, to see man returning to a sound judgment, a correct taste, a pure affection, a resigned spirit under painful dealings of Providence, a cordial submission to rightful authority and perfect law, a genial fellowship with all good beings, and a joyful laboriousness in every good work. God delights in our sanctification, too, because

3. *It is the restoration of perfect loveliness to man.* — He has no pleasure in sin. It is to him what defilement, deformity, disorder, confusion, is to the most perfect human senses. It is supremely offensive; and he would prefer, in every case, to see holiness in its stead. Holiness is lovely in God's eyes. It is moral beauty, and is everywhere the most delightful object he can contemplate. If you propose the inquiry concerning any rational being in heaven, earth, or hell, would God prefer its perfect holiness, this moment, to its being in any other state, there can be but one reply: this is the will of God, even their sanctification. He loves the sight of a soul sensible of its sinful state; still more, of one fleeing from his sins to his Saviour; and still more, of one restored to perfect holiness, which is perfect personal excellence and loveliness.

And this satisfaction must reach a high degree when all the sanctified shall come together, and form one perfect family, nation, or kingdom.

This natural view of the case prepares us now to survey

II. THE ACTIONS OF GOD IN REFERENCE TO MAN'S SANCTIFICATION, that we may see some practical evidence of his desire to secure it. — And when we come to his acts, we see more than mere desire; we see great earnestness.

That earnestness has manifested itself in every conceivable form. It has approached man on every side, assailed him at every accessible point, pursued and pressed him with every variety of motive. It comes to us in the form of

Authority. — We are made for law and authority. A part of our nature which has survived the general wreck is our susceptibility to feel the requirements of a rightly constituted authority. See, then, the Eternal God clothing himself in the robes of divine majesty, and coming down to the rugged throne of Horeb, to make a law requiring man to be holy; and throwing around that law all the sanctions of divine approbation and displeasure, eternal bliss and eternal woe. There is earnestness. God is moved at the sight of our sinfulness, and in the prospect of our sanctification deeply moved; and he intends that we shall be. Therefore he addresses the conscience, the most commanding faculty in our souls, when it acts at all. And the sum of his law is, Thou shalt be right and do right; thou shalt love God and man; in other words, thou shalt be holy. And to this requirement are appended the two infinite sanctions, or motives; eternal reward and eternal punishment. What is intended by all this? Surely, that God would by it move us to become holy. And that in the magnitude of that authority which commands, and the immensity of those consequences which he attaches to obe-

dience and disobedience, he is expressing the earnestness of his desire that we should be holy. To this mighty influence he adds the potent discipline of his Providence. Life is full of meaning, of a divine meaning; and blessed is he who can interpret it. Providence is a mode of God's action. And as all his acts tend to a definite and glorious result, that result must be nothing transient or trivial. God and man may be seeking totally different ends from the same action; and man is free to defeat some of God's highest ends, so far as his own welfare is concerned. Let us, then, take the afflictive dispensations of Providence. They smite us, they wither our hearts, they blast our gourd, they break our anchor-chain, they cast us into a fiery furnace. What then? These light afflictions work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. The father is chastening his son. The vine-dresser is pruning off the too luxuriant shoots; the refiner is preparing the silver to reflect his own image. This is the will of God, even your sanctification.

We see the mighty forces of nature suspended,—the sea rolled back upon itself, the sun arrested in his course, the dead raised to life,—to call forth from the heart of man that faith and love which are the starting-point of holiness. Nay, we see the Son of God forsaking the throne of his glory, and descending to tabernacle among us in sorrow, toil, and shame, that he may show man how to be holy, and may win him to it. We see him in agony, bleeding away his life, to this same end. Then he ascends the throne of heaven, and wields the powers of the universe, and sends forth his Holy

Spirit to make the heart of man holy. Thus God manifests the earnestness of his will for our sanctification.

With our minds full of this fact, let us now see what important practical consequences flow from it. Since there is nothing about our personal conditions, interests, or destinies, which God so much desires as our sanctification, then

We should rejoice in our afflictions. — This was Paul's view. These light, momentary afflictions work out for us an eternal weight of glory. They do not necessarily benefit us, but that is their tendency and design. They humble, chasten, elevate, and purify, those who recognize God's goodness and wisdom in them. "Tribulation worketh patience; patience, experience; and experience, hope." God, in chastising us, is aiming at our perfection, and our eternal peace. How improper it then is for us to murmur, and fret, and yield ourselves up to sorrow alone! Christ needed, not a personal but an official sanctification; and he cheerfully submitted himself to the fiery trial, that he might "be perfect through suffering." We need not love pain or loss for their own sakes; but we may learn to rejoice in them when they loosen our cable, and set us free to return to our native, heavenly home. We may well rejoice in the furnace that is consuming our dross. Another consequence of this fact is,

We should be earnest in the use of religious ordinances. — We see that the end God seeks for us is the highest we can pursue for ourselves. The change to be produced is more important than any other we can experience, and it is one upon which we see that God sets so high a value. But

this change is effected through the ordinances of religion, as the appointed means. "Sanctify them through thy truth." Therefore we should relax our energies at no stage of the process. Some of us may be at the very commencement of this momentous work; for it has a beginning. Whatever the form or manner of conversion, its essence is the same in every human being. It is a turning of the heart from wrong objects of desire and pursuit to right,—from wrong dependence to right. The man who has an unsanctified heart seeks temporal good for himself, and for those he loves. He is godless, selfish, worldly. He thinks of the world, pursues the world, enjoys the world. To begin to be holy is to cease from all this; and to begin to hate this selfishness, and godlessness, and worldliness. The thoughts begin to take a new range,—the heart, to seek new objects of pursuit, and dwell on new objects of affection; the process of purification is begun; the dross of selfishness and ungodliness is loosening from the soul, to leave it a purified, holy vessel in God's eternal sanctuary. And with this change in the desires comes a change in the confidence of the heart. It ceases to trust the world or self. Christ has now taken that place. He is trusted for all the soul wants, which now discovers its utter bankruptcy. Trust is the deepest homage of the heart, and man cannot be holy until his heart renders this homage to our God and Saviour.

Of course so radical a change in the heart must greatly affect the outward life. All immorality ceases. Benevolence, honor, fidelity, marks the intercourse with man, if

they were wanting before; and if they were not wanting, they now manifest themselves as based on profounder principles, and connected with a humility before unknown. And to these is conjoined a devotional attendance on the various rites of divine worship.

Then this change has

A progress. — And that is the will of God, that we be more perfectly transformed. With Paul we are to forget the things that are behind, and reach forward to those which are before. Inward principles are to be strengthened. Wrong habits are to be subdued. A divine life is to be gradually superseding an earthly; and a benevolent, a selfish life. This is the will of God. The intercourse with God is to be more complete and frequent. The higher motives are to take place of the lower, in all actions. Men are to feel, in their intercourse with us, that we are becoming more like Christ.

Then it is to have

A consummation. — And this is the will of God, that we become perfect in holiness. That is the end, — the great end, to which all the preceding steps were only means. This will be the second creation, upon which our benevolent Creator will look, and pronounce it very good. Therefore, to the last, we should wait on God in his appointed way, with even increased earnestness. Moreover,

We should be confident of success in the right employment of religious ordinances. — There is no ground for the same confidence in the pursuit of any other end, for no other is so precious in God's sight. All who are struggling

toward this glorious attainment have the strongest reasons to be encouraged. You are not alone in this work. The very commencement of it separated you from an irreligious world. They wonder, now, that they miss you here and there,—that you no longer furnish them the same entertainment as formerly. You lose their sympathy and countenance. You find too few of the members of the church ready to sympathize with your new feelings; and thus you may come to a discouraging feeling of solitariness and helplessness. If you knew it, this vacant place is made around you that it may be filled with a new presence. You are cast off from man, that you may be thrown upon God. Human hearts repel, that you may turn to that heart full of a divine sympathy. Whoever may be indifferent to your new feelings, desires, and purposes, One is not; and, if you could but apprehend it, that One is all; all else are vanity, nonentity, in the comparison. The mighty God of Jacob wills your sanctification. You are struggling for faith, humility, charity. He has fixed his heart upon your attaining them all, and in perfection. He wills with you, has willed before you; has never changed his will, nor diminished the intensity of his desire. All his perfections, all his purposes and plans, are with you. Set any other end before you, and you have not God with you. He may permit you to succeed in that pursuit; he may, in righteous anger, prosper you. But, in pursuing this end, you have God fully with you. Can man ask for more encouragement? You go to pray, discouraged and fearful. You wish to pray aright. You desire to make some attainment

in holiness. Well, you go not alone; for this is the will of God, even your sanctification. This truth also

Furnishes the highest obligation and the fullest encouragement to labor for each other's sanctification.— It is the will of God that every intelligent creature he has formed, be holy. Has any one a right to regard this desire of his Creator with indifference? As we are bound to pray continually, "Thy will be done on earth as in heaven," so are we bound to desire that every human being may please God, by being holy. Indifference to the spiritual interests of our fellow-men, satisfaction with their remaining in a state of unholy alienation from God, is itself a sin. But if we are bound to desire the sanctification of other men, we are also bound to do what in us lies to secure that end. Therefore, they who despise Christian missions are very wicked in God's sight. They who have no interest in them manifest an indifference to God's will, which betrays a heart at enmity with him.

The obligation to do what we can to secure the sanctification of all men is founded on this desire of God, and on our obligation to secure those results which are pleasing to him.

And no other labor has such encouragement. The very effort we make is pleasing to our heavenly Father, whether successful or unsuccessful. But in no work have we more reason to expect ultimate success and such desirable results; for there is no other which is so entirely accordant with the will of God.

Here is the responsibility and encouragement of those who

are members of the same church. We have engaged to seek each other's sanctification. What motives to faithfulness can be stronger than these? In doing this, they are discharging their highest obligations, pleasing their heavenly Father, and enjoying his coöperation. If God desires the sanctification of all men, then

The condition of the irreligious is fearful.—God wishes us to be holy. And his desire lays upon each of us the obligation to gratify him. We have no right to be grieving him, and opposing his wishes, day by day, and year after year. And there is no validity in the excuse so often presented to lull the conscience: “If God *can* help me to become holy, he is so indifferent about it that he never will.” That is not true. He is not indifferent; and, from the holiness and benevolence of his nature, never can be. Many persons, indeed, imagine that they are desirous of being saved, but that their feelings on this point find no sympathy in God. Now, so far from this, God desires them to be saved; and his feelings find no sympathy in theirs. They may wish to send on and secure a good apartment in the hotel beyond the sea of death, as travellers often do in going from city to city. But if salvation consists in becoming sanctified, that does not enter into their wishes, much less their plans. Let every one, then, press his own conscience with the weight of this consideration: God desires me to be holy, and to be perfect in his likeness. And to this let it be added that he requires us to be holy. “Be ye holy, for I am holy, saith the Lord.” That command makes our obligation complete.

And it is universally binding. No human being is exempt in any condition, or at any time. And whoever is not turning from sin to holiness, is living in the incessant breach of the highest obligations. Conscience may be blinded and silenced by ingenious excuses, and quieted by the approbation of others; but that does not annihilate or diminish the obligation to turn from sin to holiness.

And every one who feels this obligation the most deeply, has the deepest sense of his own failure to be what God requires. We have but begun to obey this command; and the more earnestly we endeavor to obey it, the more profoundly do we discover the evil and the power of sin. Hence the best men make the most self-abasing acknowledgments of sin to God, the more fully they are escaping from its thraldom. What remains, is to them infinitely more dreadful than the whole undiminished power and being of sin in the impenitent; as the weary traveller approaching his home finds the last obstructing mountains more tedious and painful than many much more rugged and difficult, which met him in the beginning of his way.

Some, however, relieve themselves from the pressure of obligation by a formal admission of their inability. They can do many things, and are willing to do them, which would express some earnestness in regard to securing eternal happiness. But, to begin the work of personal sanctification, to change their own hearts, and to cultivate the love of God, seems to them a hopeless undertaking. They turn from the subject after coming to this conclusion, relieved from all

sense of obligation, satisfied with themselves, if not with their prospects. Here is a sad delusion. The discovery of our own weakness, so far from being a step backward, is the first onward step in the kingdom of heaven. When the desire of holiness and eternal life is once awakened in the human soul, the next step toward life is faith. But pride or self-reliance is the great antagonist to faith. When will men understand this, and learn that every attainment in the divine life is a manifestation of superhuman strength put forth in him who is conscious of his own weakness. Whoever you may be, fellow-mortal, you are bound to be all that you can conceive of in being pious, religious, converted, a Christian, godly or sanctified. Your excuses are pretences, not reasons. There is an impossibility, in one view of the case. And you may contemplate that until your pride is thoroughly destroyed. But there is equally a possibility. God will help you to become holy. If you will come to Christ, his strength will be made perfect in your weakness. If you will with cordial sympathy enter into the feelings which induced him to visit our world, to live his lowly and sorrowful life, to die on the accursed tree; if you will cordially die to sin with him, be crucified to the world, descend with him to his sepulchre, and there bury your old nature, then shall you burst the gates of death with him, and rise to a new life. The single question, then, is, will you? It matters not what practical difficulty lies in your way. This embarrassment is but a work of the devil; and the Son of God "was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil." Frequently you have said, "Well,

after all, this religion is such an intangible, mystical, remote affair, that I can do nothing with it practically. If there is a supernatural influence that comes down upon some persons, by which they see it differently, and find what the first step is, I must wait for that. But, as it is, I can do nothing; and I see not that I am bound to make any change, or take any step in this matter.” And yet, when you have reached that conclusion, and stated that argument so satisfactorily to yourself, a voice reaches you from the throne above, “Be ye holy, for I am holy; thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.” Your premises were correct, that you are weak as infancy in this great work. But your inference is unsound, that, therefore, you are not bound to be sanctified. You are bound, because this is the will of God, even your sanctification. Your refusal to begin is unreasonable, because you have all the sympathy of an omnipotent Saviour with you, the instant you commence in earnest. And the more you distrust yourself, and trust him, the more rapid will be your progress.

Now, to neglect this duty, and disregard all these obligations, is fearful. It is offering desperate resistance to God; fostering an utter delusion about your own true interests; wasting all your zeal and energy upon objects which possess no intrinsic value, while neglecting those of infinite moment. The truth, then, before us brings us to this urgent conclusion:

Every person who knows that the will of God is his sanctification, is bound to turn at once to the Lord

Jesus Christ, to seek and trust him with the whole heart.
— God made you to be holy. He has always supremely desired this concerning you. Up to this moment you have disregarded that will, broken through the restraints he had thrown around you. And now, with unchanged desire, his eye is fixed on you, and his parental sovereign voice is addressing you: “Be ye holy, for I am holy.” Here, O fellow-man, here is your duty — your solemn, urgent, immediate duty. Abandon your excuses and vain reasonings. They change no fact; they do no good. They only deceive your conscience, harden your heart, and offend your God.

I once pressed this subject on the attention of a young friend. He admitted everything, felt everything; only did not allow the conviction to penetrate and possess his soul, “I must take the first step now.” It seemed to him as it seems now to you. It cannot be at this living moment. And yet, in a few months from that day, he sent for me in haste from the bed of death. Then he felt that it is a work of infinite importance, and of immediate obligation. But why more now that he lay on that bed, pressed with a thousand embarrassments, than if he sat where you sit on that bench? O, the deceived heart of man! O, the subtlety and ascendancy of our dread enemy!

Who is going from this house of God to-day, regardless of his Maker’s will? Who can afford to perish under such circumstances? God wills your sanctification, and you are not willing it!

VIII.

EFFECTUAL PRAYER.

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."
— James 5: 16.

Two facts are here affirmed: that prayer is efficacious; that the efficacy of prayer is proportioned to its holy energy. The words "effectual, fervent," represent one Greek word, which might be rendered — energized, *inwrought*. Prayer is not words nor attitudes; nor merely a desire feebly felt, and coldly uttered, to a being scarcely recognized. The spirit of prayer is the result of energy; and is itself the highest form of human energy. It is the mighty result of the power of the Holy Spirit, who "searcheth the deep things of God;" aiding our infirmities, and making "intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." The prince of apostles, accounting for his own Christian efficiency, says, that God wrought mightily in him. It is likewise inwrought by our own efforts, and the assiduous cultivation of religious principles and sentiments in our hearts.

We first maintain, then,

I. THAT PRAYER MAY PREVAIL WITH GOD. — This fact is

more doubted than denied. Many who affirm it would find, on a close scrutiny, that they in reality disbelieve it. For our belief is controlled, and our feelings are determined, by many propositions which we have never framed into language, and much less accepted on sufficient evidence. One of these propositions is, that prayer has no tendency to influence God; or, in another form, "I shall receive no benefit in answer to prayer." We believe that proposition every day we live without prayer; every time we rise discouraged from prostration in prayer. It becomes us, then, to look closely into the sources of evidence on this very important question: May prayer prevail with God? or, is it unreasonable to expect to receive what we ask from God? And I now affirm, in view of all objections, that there are no valid reasons for doubting that prayer may bring us blessings from God, directly and indirectly, which we should not procure without it.

Let us, then, notice, that all our objections to a full belief in the efficacy of prayer arise from a greater confidence in our own unaided reasonings, and certain intuitive convictions, than in the testimony of God; a vain confidence, by which we make it impossible that God should teach us anything we cannot know without his instruction.

In this connection, therefore, I would remind you of one or two facts, which tend to modify an extravagant confidence in our reason.

One is this: The Author of nature has not consulted human wisdom in the arrangement of even material causes. We know that fire consumes wood. But how do we come to

know it? By reasoning beforehand how it ought to be? No; there is not a single law of matter or mind that man has found out by anticipation. He has, indeed, conjectured, after seeing the operation of a cause in one set of circumstances, that it might operate equally in another; but, then, he has depended on previous observation for this conjecture, and on subsequent observation to confirm the conjecture. And human reason, therefore, is no more competent to deny that prayer may move God, and so move all second causes, than it was competent to deny that the same force which makes an apple fall to the ground binds the planetary system together. God has not waited for human wisdom in arranging causes and effects; and he may, therefore, have given prayer a place which that wisdom would not have assigned it. But again:

The Author of nature has contradicted the wisdom of man in the constitution of the universe. I mean by the wisdom of man, his mere logic, independent of his observation, and those impressions or perceptions to which men yield such firm credence, even in opposition to the Scriptures. For more than five thousand years from the creation of the world the wisest men were continually making the most egregious blunders in describing the processes of nature. Every ancient cosmogony, but that of Moses, is now seen to be a mass of folly. The reason of man was continually declaring how things ought to be and must be. But, when Lord Bacon at length arose to disenthral the human mind, he showed that, except in the department of abstract truth,

as mathematics and metaphysics, they must look outward; that evidence, not intuition, must guide them. Conjectures concerning the Creator's plans and modes of action were useless; and, if confided in, injurious. We now see that human reason, without any testimony from God to guide it, was perfectly unable to tell how he ought to make a universe, or how he had made it. If, then, men have reasoned so short of the truth, and so against it, in regard to material causes, why should we trust our reason against the testimony of God in the higher departments of truth?

These general considerations we adduce before making a more particular examination of the objections which human reason presents to the efficacy of prayer. It is perfectly manifest that there is no solid, rational ground for denying or doubting the efficacy of prayer, because the whole subject lies beyond the sphere of intuitive or abstract reasoning. Yet there are objections which these general views are not sufficient to remove.

One may be thus stated: "We are conscious of an immeasurable disparity between the Infinite mind and our limited understandings. We cannot teach him anything. When we tell him our wants and feelings, he knows beforehand all that we can say, and more than we can say; so that our expressions at last come short of his knowledge. Is it not, then, a loss of time, and a vain ceremony, to make such addresses to the Deity? Even we, ourselves, find it very irksome to hear from a person a long recital of his troubles, and especially when we happen to know the whole story

before he begins to recount it." This is the strongest form I can give the objection.

Now, there are at least three distinct grounds upon which its entire futility can be shown: the very nature of communion; the relations and feelings of a teacher; and those of a parent. If there be a possibility of such a thing as communion between God and his creatures, then that communion must be the interchange of thoughts and feelings. To be intellectual, social, and spiritual, it must be that, and nothing else than that. It might, indeed, be more interesting to Jehovah to commune with the archangels, their range of thought being so much loftier, and their emotions being so much nobler than ours. Yet, if *we* are to commune with God, it must be by imparting *our* thoughts to him, and expressing our emotions, such as they are. So that, unless it can be shown that the Creator is forever to be cut off from all intellectual and social communion with all his creatures (for the objection as really lies against his communion with angels and archangels), then our intellectual disparity is not a good and sufficient reason why we should not pray. Moreover, we can learn from the feelings of a teacher who takes a deep interest in the communication of his pupil, how God can be pleased to hear our prayers. It is not so much that the pupil imparts any information, or that his notions are all correct; but it is because he is making progress, and because this is the way in which he is to be developed. Our heavenly Father may see that by no exercise we perform do we make such progress in all spiritual attainments as by fervent, ener-

gized prayer. And then, again, the parental feelings explain much. In the nursery, words are not weighed with the balance of the schools. The first distinct utterance of the endearing epithet FATHER, from an infant's lips, has more eloquence to his ear than the most learned and skilful orator ever utters. Nay, the prattling of the little creature finds its way to the deepest recesses of sensibility in the soul. We must remember, then, that our prayer commences thus : "Our Father." Call it prattling, if you please; but a father's ear is to receive it, and a father's heart to appraise it. Say that the recital of our troubles is tedious to Gabriel, if you please; but remember it is not Gabriel, but our heavenly Father, who is to hear it.

A kindred difficulty to this is, that "there is such majesty and grandeur in the King of heaven that we are too mean to approach him." It may suffice now to say, in reference to this embarrassment, that it can be turned into an encouragement by applying to it one passage of the Word : "If I be a Father, where is my honor; and if I be a Master, where is my fear?" The legitimate consequence of his majesty and authority and glory is to exact homage, adoration, and praise. This spiritual tribute of thanksgiving and praise, this humble confession of sin, and recognition of dependence, is precisely the kind of revenue which we can furnish to the king's treasury; and, therefore, just the kind that he expects of us. There is one blessed line of Scripture worth infinitely more than all the deductions of an earth-born

wisdom : the High and Mighty One declares, “ Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me.”

Another doubt arises from the divine goodness, about which we sometimes reason thus : “ If God is infinitely kind, and disposed to promote our welfare, then he will not withhold any blessing, simply because we do not ask for it, or ask with sufficient fervor ; nor would he more bestow it for our asking.” Now, upon all this logic we ask two questions : Is it so in fact ? and ought it to be so of right ?

As to the matter of fact, we may make our experiment in any department of life. Man needs, for example, an abundant supply of the fruits of the earth. Let him, then, apply this short-hand inference from God’s goodness to this case. God is kind, and disposed to bestow every good thing on all his creatures ; therefore he will not withhold any needful quantity of Indian corn and wheat and vegetables, simply because we do not perform this or that agricultural operation, nor is it reasonable to think he will the more bestow it for our labors. Does omnipotent Goodness require the aid of ploughs and harrows to feed his children ? Here we see the reasons to be entirely contradictory to facts ; for we know that it holds true in regard to every department of life, “ the hand of the diligent maketh rich, but the sluggard cometh to want.” And there can be no reason, derived from the kindness of God, to show that it is not as true of praying as of ploughing. And as we can see how the welfare of man and of society is promoted by the arrangement which creates a necessity for labor, and how this arrangement is a fruit of

the divine goodness in all the arts and employments of life, so we can see how the goodness of God may have made prayer a necessary means of procuring many indispensable blessings, on account of its direct benefit to us. Nothing in its place more cultivates the character than fervent, effectual, or energized prayer; and there is, in itself considered, no higher privilege to man than this communing and pleading with the Most High. It may be found true that prayer is the chief instrument of our spiritual cultivation, considered only in its direct influence on ourselves. Look at it in this light :

Temptation has no power to the soul while in communion with its Maker;

Every truth in the Scriptures completes its work in us when it leads us to address God with appropriate feeling;

Providence completes its work in us when it leads to bless the hand that feeds, to kiss the hand that smites us. “Is any afflicted, let him pray;” and, to cite no more illustrations,

Sympathy with a Holy Redeemer, in regard to his kingdom, gains nowhere on the heart as in prayer.

A fourth difficulty is with the Omniscience, Foreknowledge, and Unchangeableness, of God. The force of the objection is this: “If he has determined from all eternity what he will do, or if he knows everything that we can tell him, our telling him cannot change his view, so as to induce him to change his purpose.” This chilling argument is with many persons very powerful. It is strange that it should be so

with some ; who, if asked whether they believe in the foreknowledge of God, would promptly answer, By no means. But with those who believe that all things are known to him, from the foundation of the world, there is an easy escape from this difficulty. They may know their reasoning to be unsound, because it does not apply to anything else where they may test its validity. They might just as well refuse to plant as to pray, on this ground. God knows the results in the one case as much as in the other ; and your sowing the seed in expectation of a crop is just as inconsistent with his foreknowledge as your praying for rain, or success in business, or the conversion of a soul, in expectation of such result. Let it be borne in mind, that no such view of God's attributes should ever be held as reduces him to a machine, an automaton, instead of a rational being, thinking, deciding, and acting, in view of facts. None can doubt that the characters and conduct of men influence the purposes of God. If a man obeys God, he gives him the reward of obedience ; and if he disobeys, the punishment due to disobedience. Then it is manifest that our actions affect the purposes and actions of God ; and why not our worship, our praying, considered either as praying or as a form of obedience ? Let two men present themselves before God at the same moment, — a blasphemer, and an humble suppliant, — the one to mock, the other to pray. Do they both affect him alike ? Will his treatment of both be the same ? Impossible !

A kindred objection to prayer, and almost identical with this, is, that "God is acting from fixed laws ; prayer for

rain can do no good, because rain is the result of specific material causes, which act by regular and purely mechanical forces ; not depending upon any present volition of the Creator, but merely upon that original volition which called them into existence.” Now, here it is assumed,

That no other than material causes or forces can affect matter. This is contradicted by creation, by miracles, and by the moral purposes for which the universe was created.

It assumes that God has left no place for his own direct action.

It assumes that you know all the causes of events ; and that prayer is not one.

The Holiness and Justice of God too have discouraged some from praying. This I esteem as really the greatest difficulty on the whole subject ; and yet that which sceptics never suggest, and the worldly-minded do not feel. The other difficulties exist only in our imaginations ; this lies deep in the character of Jehovah, and the principles of his eternal kingdom. This is a difficulty which no reasoning would ever have removed, which no efforts of man could ever have diminished. To meet and remove this, the whole arrangement of the incarnation, death, resurrection, and mediation, of Christ, was made. To this I understand the term “righteous” in the text to refer. It is a technical term, and must, by every true biblical scholar, be admitted to mean more than a mere worldly uprightness. It belongs to the man who can say, “In the Lord have I righteousness ;” who has found in the Lord Jesus the baptism of a legal purifica-

tion, extending first to the conscience, then to the heart ; who, being freely pardoned for Christ's sake, freely obeys the law of Christ; who has boldness to approach the mercy-seat, but solely because Christ is the great intercessor, ever representing the believer and his prayers before the Father. On this Gospel-ground the justice and holiness of God present no obstacles to the prayer of the penitent believer, living in the righteousness of a practical obedience. We are exhorted to come boldly to a throne of grace, not because we have never sinned, but "because we have such a High Priest." How beautifully is it described in the third chapter of Zechariah ! Joshua the high priest represents, not the great High Priest, but that royal priesthood of which the church consists. He "was clothed in filthy garments." That was his character estimated by the perfect law of God. And Satan was standing at his right hand to resist him. But the Lord, who redeems his church by the shedding of his own blood, said to those who stood before him, "Take away the filthy garments from him." "And unto him he said, Behold I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee ; and I will clothe thee with a change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments." That explains the manner, and exhibits the reason why human prayers are heard by him who is infinite in holiness. The Pharisee and Publican, praying in the temple, illustrate by contrast the spirit of faith and self-righteousness. In fact, it is a test of self-righteousness, that when worldly it seldom prays, and

never prays fervently; when religious, it is formal, and never prays with an earnest importunity of supplication.

These, we believe, are the main theoretical difficulties which induce us to relax in the exercise of prayer. And thus far we have reasoned independently of the authority of the Scriptures; not that we imagine there can be any other positive ground of confidence on this point, nor that we believe the natural reason is competent to determine this great question. But we have desired to show, simply, that there are in reality no solid objections to the doctrine we are now exhibiting. The argument from the Scriptures may be briefly stated.

II. PRAYER WILL PREVAIL WITH GOD.—Let us turn to

1. *The commands.*—They are such as these: “Pray without ceasing.” “I will, therefore, that men pray everywhere.” “The end of all things is at hand; be therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.” “Seek the Lord while he may be found.” Commands of this nature abound, and are addressed, with the other general precepts of God’s law, to all mankind. Their use as arguments is indirect. They prove the prevalence of prayer, on the ground of God’s rewarding all obedience by blessings appropriate to the form of obedience. “The hand of the diligent makes rich. Blessed are they that hunger, for they shall be filled.” Thus is there an appropriateness, in each reward bestowed by grace, to the form of obedience rewarded. And it is obvious that the appropriate reward to prayer is a bestowment of the blessings sought in prayer. There are, also,

2. *Promises to prayer*, lavished in prodigal bounty, like the rich fruits of the earth, springing up through all these glorious fields of revealed truth and grace. — “Ask, and it shall be given you. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved. He will regard the prayer of the destitute. He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” On these no comment need be offered. They are the promises and pledges of the Eternal God. What more can human faith require?

3. *The doctrine of prayer*.— It is connected in Scripture with the Trinity.

The Father is represented as on a throne of grace. This, of course, is figurative, but real. It is expressive of his feelings, arrangements, and moral attitude, toward men. When you hear of the throne of judgment, you understand that our Creator will deal with us as a judge. When you read of the mercy-seat, you may regard him as hearing prayer.

The Holy Spirit is represented as interceding for us, by creating within our hearts the desire to pray, and teaching us how to address the Most High.

The Son is represented as interceding in heaven for us.

This is the scriptural doctrine of prayer. And it evidently involves the fact, that God regards prayer as an important exercise on our part.

4. *The history of prayer* is among the most interesting portions of the Bible.— It is one of the many features in which that wondrous book stands entirely apart from all

other books. It is a constant display of the condescension and kindness of God. And it is well worthy of remark, that with the record of the greater part of the prayers there described the answer to the prayer is likewise recorded. Prayers, and answer to prayer, as much distinguish the lives of Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and Daniel, as any other events. Jacob was named Israel because he prevailed in prayer in a princely manner. Samuel, Elijah, Hezekiah, David, called on the Lord for special blessings, and the blessings were granted. The case of Elijah is cited in immediate connection with the text. And, to encourage our faith, it is mentioned that he partook of the infirmities common to our nature. All the requests made to Christ, when on earth, were prayers; and none that was proper in its nature was refused. And in the Book of Revelation the power of prayer is strikingly presented. After John had seen incense preserved in golden vials before the throne, as a symbol which taught him that prayer long unanswered is still not forgotten in heaven, he then saw (8: 3—5) this vision: “An angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand.” Now, these long-remembered prayers are about to be answered; and what is the consequence? They had prayed for the overthrow of superstition, ignorance, and oppression. And now the angel takes the

censer, and fills it with fire from off the altar, and casts it into the earth: “And there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.” Men everywhere saw the lightnings, and heard the thunderings; but probably few of them suspected how much the prayers before the throne had to do with them.

We must now briefly illustrate the other principle in the text:

III. THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER IS PROPORTIONED TO ITS FERVID ENERGY.—The Holy Spirit energizes the human soul in prayer. He kindles a holy fire, but it is on the altar of the heart; he produces groanings, but they are described as those “which cannot be uttered.” There are traces throughout the sacred volume of these deep movements of the soul, these unutterable groanings. Then there are many manifestations of the energized prayer symbolically represented, as in the wrestling of Jacob; and directly described, as in the praying of him whose “sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood, falling to the ground,” — who, in the days of his flesh, “offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death.”

We instinctively feel that the highest degree and the strongest expression of approbation belongs to the highest forms of character. But, as already noticed, there is no more distinctive exhibition of the highest form of religious character than the habit of fervent and earnest prayer. It is connected with the most thorough conquest of that enslave-

ment to sense which is the curse and degradation of man. It shows a mind living in the precincts of the world of light. It is a conquest over that indolence and brutal sluggishness which mark our debased enslavement to an infirm and earth-born body. The energetic prayer shows that the soul has caught at least a glimpse of the heavenly glory; breathed the pure breath of a heavenly atmosphere; enjoyed communion with its divine Saviour; burst, for a moment, its accursed bonds; and now it cries, “My soul thirsteth after God, in a dry and thirsty land, where no waters be.”

Now, there is an innate sense of propriety and justice which would incline us to expect that God would put some signal mark of his approbation upon such a character, rather than upon a worldly and a half-worldly character. We should expect to see him admit such a soul nearer to his presence; giving it more marks of his approbation, and showing that he feels, as we do, increasing sympathy with those who have increasing attachment to the objects and persons we most esteem. Some prayers are unseasoned wood on the altar, and unprepared incense in the censer. There is more smoke than fire,—more simmering and smouldering than flame. There have been no pains to dry the wood and the frankincense, and hence so many perform the service at the altar unskilfully. “Let my prayer,” said one who knew his privilege, “let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.” There was something of real value burning on that altar. A precious life was there immolated; a lamb was consumed;

the flame, like a spirit, lifted up the sacrifice, and carried it to God; the cloud of incense mounted, and bore its sweet odor to the skies.

Such is prayer, — “the effectual, fervent prayer, the inwrought prayer of the righteous man.” It burns on the heart as God’s holy altar; it consumes the idols of the heart; it makes a sacrifice of every interest and every faculty; there is a life given up there, — “a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.” And is it not probable that God will accept such sacrifice? — that he will signally express his approbation of a prayer which is wrought in the soul by the gracious power of his own Spirit, who thus “maketh intercession for us;” and wrought in the soul, too, by our own earnest endeavors to learn to pray, and to be ready to pray? O, yes; it must be that there is a peculiar power and prevalence in this energized, inwrought prayer, above that of the sleepy, careless, half-hearted praying that is the fruit of no effort, neither of the Holy Spirit nor the human spirit, but the drowsy task performed under the lash of conscience.

It must be that God has an ear for the cry of the humble, the needy, and the importunate, while “the rich he sends empty away.” Look, then, into the Scriptures, and see how this doctrine of degrees enters even into this economy of grace, where the idea of human merit is discarded. It affects the responsibilities of men. “Where much is given, much will be required.” It affects the actions of men. “He that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully.” He that “gained five talents” has “five cities;” while he that gained “ten

talents" has "ten cities," as his reward. Solomon asked, earnestly and supremely, for the best thing, and it was given as a man never had it; and all inferior things were added. Abraham, at his first prayer for Sodom, had the salvation of the city promised on the condition of there being fifty righteous persons in it; and the more he prayed, the more he was emboldened, and the more favorable conditions he obtained. Who knows but he might have saved Sodom for his own sake alone, as an interceding child of God, if his faith had dared go so far? Christ distinctly shows us that the widow gained her cause before the unjust judge, simply through this feature of her prayer. It was energized, pervaded with desire and purpose, with will, and patience, and power. "The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

Then there is great folly in despising prayer. — Many persons regard praying as a mark of weakness, and especially do they so look upon men's meeting together for the express purpose of praying. Few, however, go so far as to affirm that it is an indication of weakness in a father to assemble his family daily for the purpose of worshipping God. But "a weekly meeting of men for prayer is too insignificant an employment for sensible people." Creature, dost thou know that thy Creator condescends to be present there, and to hear with interest those praises and supplications? — and who art thou that thou shouldst despise it?

Sinner, thou wilt pray somewhere. The day is hastening when thou wilt call for help.

Proud reasoner, who art thou that layest down rules for God's intercourse with man ?

Prayer is the highest form of human power. — It is power over the Almighty, who says, "Take hold upon my strength." It reaches his providence and his Spirit. It affects time and eternity. It is the best guardianship we can exercise over our own interests and families, the church, the nation, and the race. There have been no men of greater power than Abraham, Jacob, and Daniel. When you see a mighty orator rising before a body of senators, and rolling back the tide of unfriendly feeling which had been excited toward him and his state, you regard it as an exhibition of great power. I will show you a greater exercise of power. When the cloud of divine vengeance was ready to burst on guilty Israel, Moses stood alone, and held it up, staying those storms of wrath. That is power indeed.

Here is indicated the source of weakness in the church. We have not yet learned to pray. I mean, we do not exercise the higher kind of prayer, nor understand the work of intercession. Luther used to pray for three hours each day. When the Wesleys were on the field, they were absorbed in details of work ; but in the preparation for that work, they were mighty in prayer. Paul prayed, "without ceasing," to the close of his life. To prevail with men, we must prevail with God, as Israel did. When the true church shall have come, nothing will more distinguish her than her praying. When Satan's kingdom is about to fall, our present style of praying will have come to be regarded as very infantile.

IX.

PARENTAL SOLICITUDE.

"And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. And she went, and sat her down over against him, a good way off, as it were a bow-shot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lifted up her voice, and wept."—Gen. 21: 15, 16.

IF the family of Abraham had sustained no peculiar relations to the purposes of God and the redemption of our race, their history would possess a peculiar charm in other respects. But all other considerations are lost in the moral splendor which shines back on them from him who, in the fulness of time, condescended to take on him the seed of Abraham.

"The purpose of God, according to election" stood, "not of works, but of him that calleth." The Messiah should come from Abraham; but through Isaac, and not Ishmael; through Jacob, and not Esau. And the purposes of God embrace, as their instruments, the whole series of human actions and human events, without reference to their moral character; without affecting it, or diminishing, in the minutest degree, man's responsibility for his own actions.

In the instance before us we have Sarah's expedient, manifesting a want of faith in God; polygamy bringing discord into Abraham's family; the impudence of Hagar and her boy becoming insupportable. And yet all this series of human follies executing, in the end, God's wise purpose, that "the child of the bond-woman should not inherit with the son of the promise."

When Abraham found the house too strait to contain both parties, he sent Hagar away to her kindred, in Egypt. And it is on that journey that we now find her in deep distress. She seems to have lost her way, and to have expended her provisions, and especially to have exhausted their supply of water. Ishmael was now quite sixteen years old — rather large to carry; yet she seems to have borne the burden of his fainting frame, after the parching of thirst had begun to consume his strength. Mr. Belzoni says: "It is difficult to form a correct idea of a desert, without having been in one. It is an endless plain of sand and stones, without woods, or shelter, or herbage, or water, generally. The springs are four, six, and eight days' journey apart. Sometimes a traveller approaches one, and finds the water intolerably bitter; and when the calamity happens that the next, which is anxiously sought for, is found dry, the misery of such a situation cannot well be described. Many perish there, victims of the most horrible thirst. It is then that the value of a cup of water is really felt. In short, to be thirsty in the desert without water, exposed to the burning sun, without shelter, and no hopes of finding either, is one of the greatest

sufferings that a man can sustain. The eyes grow inflamed, the tongue and lips swell, a hollow sound is heard in the ear, which brings on deafness ; and, if no water is found, death comes slowly and horribly to his relief."

In this situation we find a broken-hearted widow-mother, and her boy. Ishmael must die ! That seemed inevitable. But how could she look upon the noble boy, and see his lustrous eye glazed and glaring, his heaving chest, his protruded tongue?—how could she see him die ? She could not; and so she carried him to a poor bush that grew solitary in that wide waste ; both that a little shelter might be found from the withering rays of the sun, and that she might conceal from herself the signs of an anguish she could not alleviate, and the agonies of a death she had no power to avert. Her sorrow was right, but her despair was sinful. Ishmael, too, was a child of promise. His maturity and manhood were pledged by him that cannot change ; and his race is, to this day, just as permanent, though not so unmixed, as that of the other son of one of the most remarkable men this world has contained. It has been well said, it was despair in opposition to God's plain promises, to her own experience, and to fact also. It was despair, not only when a promising God was at hand : but despair of water, when abundance was at hand. A fountain was near ; but she did not see it.

I have selected this case as presenting a subject deeply interesting to us all, though in various ways. That subject is

PARENTAL SOLICITUDE.

Here it assumed one form. But it has very many, according to the circumstances in which children may be placed, and the views of parents concerning them. We inquire,

I. WHAT ARE THE PROPER OBJECTS OF PARENTAL SOLICITUDE ?

1. *Salvation is supreme.* — It is not the only object of a parent's anxiety, but the chief. You need no words to prove it ; yet the distinct contemplation of it may be very useful. I will present these considerations to show it. The favor of God is above all favor. One great object of every parent's anxiety is to secure the esteem, and even admiration of men for their children. The success of a child at a school-examination, or a college-exhibition, appears to make a parent happier than a much greater amount of admiration bestowed upon himself. What parent does not delight in the good appearance, good behavior, and good reputation of his son ? No man who deserves to be called by the endearing epithet of father. Nor is it an improper desire in itself. But it may be made so, by reason of its disproportion, or the means employed to secure the result. And we have only to make the distinct appeal to a rational being, to get the right answer : which is better for your child, and how much better, the approbation of men, or the favor of God ? In this world, in the day of judgment, or far on in the progress of our interminable existence, which would you deliberately choose for your child — the admiration, the love of man, without God ; or

the love of God, and with it that of all good beings ? Parents, this is an argument, not for your logical sense, but for your hearts ; and there I wish to present it. Would you, can you, deliberately lay out a plan of education and life for your child, in which the goal shall be, the homage, even the love of his fellow-men ; or should you choose the favor of God, the Father of mercies, the love of Christ the Saviour, the fellowship of the Holy Ghost the sanctifier ? But this is what we understand as the first element of salvation : the forgiving love of God in Christ ; a state of reconciliation and covenant-alliance with Him, the infinite, the eternal, the omnipotent Jehovah, Jesus ; Maker, Upholder, Governor, Guide of all ; Saviour of them who love his law, hate their sins, and commit themselves to him. In this world or the next, in earth or heaven, there can be no comparison. If the favor of either is to be sacrificed for that of the other, if “ the friendship of the world is enmity with God,” your child must first please God, and then whomsoever else he can, consistently with that. And again, a holy heart is the greatest wealth your child can ever possess. Money is an excellent thing ; and parents generally prize it next to men’s esteem, for their offspring. But the true wealth of man is within him, not without him. God has pointed us to the mine of true wealth, in his law : pure, noble affections, purposes, and principles, that wear not and waste not, but grow with time, and brighten with the wear and tear of life ; freshening in its very decay, pouring out their treasures in proportion as other riches perish in our grasp. This is wealth : love to

God, faith in Jesus, humility, penitence, integrity, fortitude, vast sympathies with God and his purposes, benevolence to man, communion with God ; these are the blessings included in Christ's salvation. Father, would you have your child pious, or rich, if he could be but one ; to die like the humblest child of God, or like the most splendid votary of worldly honors ? And when you answer that, then you will say, with us, salvation is the first object of parental solicitude. We have another reason for it.

Heaven and hell are the alternative for every human being. Every child must live a probationer here : must live under the law and the gospel ; must die ; must be judged ; must rise to life, and joy, and glory immortal, or sink to shame, and darkness, and remorse, and despair, an outcast from God, and holiness, and blessedness, forever ! Here is no room for reasoning. We deal with facts, and must regulate our opinions and actions by them. Your child may get great possessions, and fare sumptuously every day, and be clothed in fine linen ; and yet, when he dies, may lift up his eyes in hell, being tormented in that flame. He may have the genius of Byron ; but carry that genius, with a proud, selfish, sensual heart, to the tribunal of his Judge, and to the allotments of eternity. Salvation is first for adults, for kings, for beggars, for learned men, for fools, for young men, young women, for children. "One thing is needful" for all.

But, while we thus insist on the superiority and supremacy

of salvation as the object of parental solicitude, this does not express the whole truth.

2. *Many other objects harmonize by being made subordinate to that.*— This point opens to us a wider field than it would be possible or appropriate to the occasion for us to traverse. Hagar wanted water for her child; an object, the value of which in this cooler climate we may seldom have had occasion rightly to prize. It was entirely proper for this mother, at that time, earnestly to long for a spring of water. So there are a thousand wants pertaining to man's complex being which it is legitimate to indulge. Concerning them all, it is only important now to notice that two rules pertain to them. The first is, that what is legitimate, proper, useful, and healthful, should be distinguished from all that is the opposite. Neither fashion, vanity, pride, nor any evil inclination in the parent, should be allowed to select the objects which are to be sought for the child. A sound judgment, enlightened by a correct knowledge of what God has made necessary for the most perfect growth of the body, strengthening the mind, elevating and refining the heart, and perfecting the entire physical and mental constitution — that should determine, with every father and mother, the very momentous question, What shall I seek for my child? If anything will impair the tone of any one function of the body, or hinder the most perfect formation of the mind and the character, that must be rejected, no matter if it casts your child out of what is called "society." If you were living in China, with your present knowledge of the human

frame, you ought not to choose to screw your little daughter's foot into an iron shoe, because it is genteel or fashionable. Let her foot grow as large as a comfortable shoe and vigorous exercise will allow it to grow. And yet, do not doubt that American fashion has some customs just as absurd in themselves as that Chinese custom. The other rule I alluded to is, make all other legitimate objects subordinate to salvation. They are important, and they have their place; but it is a secondary or a tertiary place. An enlightened parental love cannot hesitate to say, first of all, my child must be delivered from this blight and curse which rests upon our race. God has provided the means of such deliverance; and the application of them is life's greatest work. Deliverance from sin, conformity to Christ's character and Christ's law; a life like Christ's; the death of a Christian; the hope, the treasure, the eternity, of a Christian,—that is first for my child.

That point determined, another presents itself for our consideration :

II. GOD HAS MANIFESTED A SUPREME REGARD FOR THAT FORM OF PARENTAL SOLICITUDE.—We may go, for a moment, beyond the text before us, to see that God regarded Hagar's anxiety for her child, though her want was but for a gushing spring; though she sought to save but the temporal life of her boy. It is sufficient for our purpose that we show that, in that stupendous arrangement which is the crown of all Jehovah's works, he has made provision for children. So that when parents regard the salvation of their children as of supreme importance, and with intense solicitude, they

may be assured that he who pointed Hagar to the living fountain; nay, who furnished it, has regarded that object as that parent does. Observe,

1. *The history of children as presented by the Scriptures.* — A few instances from many will answer our purpose.

When God makes promise to Abraham, he embraces his children in it. And the reason is incidentally presented on one occasion. "I know him," says Jehovah, "that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he has spoken of him." This manifests God's interest in the pious training of children. Then see the honor put upon children piously educated, as Moses was, as Joseph was, as Samuel was. What honors came on those men, in building up the church of God, above all the honors of a worldly kind that the most ambitious parent ever dreamed of for his child? Then see the success of efforts at religious training in John the Baptist, not to say in Christ, and in Timothy. And contrast with this the sad results of neglecting this supremely important duty, as in the case of Eli's children, and in every age of Israel's degeneracy. There the fatal decline began; parents became worldly, and then the children ungodly.

But there is a stronger view of the case in another fact.

2. *God has arranged his covenant of grace with reference to the salvation of children.* — It appears under the Old Testament in two distinct forms. The one was the application of the seal of the covenant to children. The other

was a specific requirement that they should be thoroughly brought under the influence of God's law and government. I need not here expand. Then, in the New Testament it is to us perfectly clear that the same great principle is continued, because our Lord treated children as if they had the same relation to his kingdom under the New Testament as under the Old. The disciples made a mistake a little different in form from that of many in our day, but in spirit the same. They thought that the nature of this dispensation was such that little children had nothing to do with it. But they were in error. The Redeemer said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." Now, some think the ordinance of baptism desecrated when applied to an infant. I must say it of them as beloved brethren, their notion of baptism is superstitious. Does it desecrate the ordinance when they make a mistake, and apply it to an unconverted man? Certainly not. And is not the consecration of childhood to God by believing parents an act as holy as the application of water? Is it not a holy thing to proclaim to the world, and especially to godly parents, that God is in covenant with them for their children as well as themselves? Or do they believe that God is in reality no more to the offspring of them that love him, than to the offspring of the world? And if he is, why may he not express it now by a covenant seal, just as he used to do? Circumcision and religious instruction were once the two great expressions of God's regard for the chief solicitude of pious parents. Now it is baptism and instruction. It used to be that when any came

into the church, they and their households received the bloody seal. And then their parents were required to teach them the works and the laws of God incessantly and assiduously. Now, when Lydia or the jailer enters the church, they and their households are baptized; and then the parents are enjoined to train their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Thus it is manifested that our God regards with supreme interest the solicitude of parents for the spiritual and eternal welfare of their children.

This subject possesses a great and manifold interest for the church of God. — She loves the souls of all, and feels a tender concern for the young. She looks for the perpetuating of truth and righteousness to the generation that is now advancing to maturity. We must die, and lay down all these sacred interests, these holy enterprises. We shall leave this sacred cause in an enemy's country. Who will take it up, and carry it forward? With deep solicitude we turn to the children we see around us. And what a relief to our fears and anxieties to know that God's people are trying to bring them to love the Saviour, and that God promises to bless their efforts! But there is more than that. These children of the church are related to the church. We are as yet formalists in the baptism of infants. It means more than the church of our day sees in it. It has none of the absurdity of water-regeneration, but it has the deep significance of a spiritual relation. There abides on the church a most solemn responsibility in regard to baptized children,

as there exists between them and the church a most tender and solemn relation. We now content ourselves by laying it on parents and on the Sunday-school to teach the children. But it is not enough. The church must yet take up this subject, and understand it, and treat her infant members as God designed they should be. We are often looking vaguely for a great revival, and yet shrinking from the detail of daily duties. But I may not now tarry to specify.

Parents, this subject is emphatically yours. — And to you I dedicate it. How, my beloved friends, who are of the congregation, and not of the church, how have you heard all this? Do you believe, with me, that piety in the hearts of your dear children is their first necessity? Do you want them housed in God's precious ark before the storm arises? Do you not want them armed with God's panoply for life's great conflict? But you, dear friends, are responsible for this result. You acknowledge yourselves responsible for their moral characters. You will be greatly mortified if they fail in that; and why not forever reproach yourselves if they come short of heaven? Depend upon it, you have not surveyed your whole responsibilities, if you do not feel this. O, in the name of him who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me," I would say, hinder them no longer by your indifference and unbelief. Look on them. Some of them have been sick, and they are raised again. Look on them: they must go forth and do battle on this world's great field. Look on them: they must die; they want Christ then. O, show them the way yourselves; say to them, "Come, dear

children, follow me; I am going to commit my soul to Jesus, and to follow him."

Parents in the church, how many are in your families of whom you cannot believe that they love God? Here is obligation, and here is encouragement for you. In baptism you acknowledged the Lord's right to your children, and your obligations to seek their salvation supremely. And in baptism he presented himself as having all power in heaven and earth to save. And you must not undertake this work as if he had no part in it. Give him his place, and take your own. I will suggest where I think the failure is with sincere believers. Some do not establish their authority. There Eli failed. They cannot maintain the laws of the house in all things. It is to be feared that the children of such parents will not be converted. Some, on the contrary, make it all authority. The parental office has, indeed, an under stratum of authority; on that everything stands. But the visible, sensible element is mutual confidence. Encourage your children to talk out their hearts to you, and let not the first intelligence of their seriousness come to you from strangers. Adapt yourselves to their peculiar temperaments. It is worth a year's study of a child's temperament to know how to approach it, and gain its confidence, and make it feel at ease with you. Be deeply pious, and then be natural in dealing with children. Then feel your utter insufficiency, and your dependence on God. And of this feeling prayer is the natural expression.

And what an interest have the young in this subject!—

Some of you are not baptized. There is a loss to you in this. But let it only make you the more earnest to establish a covenant with God for yourselves. He does visit the iniquities of parents on children, their unbelief and their disobedience to his commands. But he makes a way of escape by personal repentance and faith. Some of you have been baptized in the holy name of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Do you know, dear children and young friends, that the eternal God has thus showed his kind regard for you? That is what your baptism means. Think of your name,—John, or Eliza, or George, or Mary; it has been associated with the holy name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in an ordinance of God's appointment. And are you growing up regardless not only of the anxieties of your pious father or mother, but also of the kindness of God? When do you expect to take the vows of God upon yourselves; to return to your covenant God, and seek his great salvation? Will you think seriously what your being baptized means? Ask your parents. Come and ask your pastor. But, above all, ask God.

X.

CHILDHOOD PRAISING THE LORD.

"And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased; and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Ye have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?"—Matt. 21: 15, 16.

WE shall never grow weary of contemplating the earthly life of Christ. It is not so much the showing forth of Divine goodness and power, as the concealment of them under the limited forms of human nature. Yet this concealment is manifestation. Glory divine comes forth in human speech and deed everywhere. The miraculous deeds of our Saviour were not efforts, nor exhibitions; they were never advertised beforehand. No high-wrought expectation was produced in the public mind, such as impostors and Satan's wonder-workers always aim to create. They were performed, not as an end, but rather as incidental to his great work. They are signs that mankind would naturally and properly expect from one of such a nature, coming on such an errand. His spiritual work being the greatest departure from all that we call laws of nature, it is natural to suppose that in outward

actions he would manifest the same departure from the ordinary course of providence.

He had just come into Jerusalem attended by the manifestation of a more open triumph than he had ever before permitted the people to display. He had entered the temple the second time as its lord, expelling them that defiled it. The diseased and the maimed had there gathered around him, and he had healed them.

And now we are to witness an instance of the contrasted effects produced in different persons by this display of his divine goodness and power. His benignant form was seen rising slowly up the great steps of the eastern gate. An eager, rushing throng were pressing along on his path, preceding and following, and gathering as closely to his side as respect for his person would allow. The tide of popular feeling had long been swelling, and had now reached a height where it must burst through its barriers. He enters the temple, its King and Lord. He commands the traffickers and brokers to quit its hallowed premises, and find other places more suited to the employments of commerce. And then, as if to satisfy any honest inquiry concerning his authority, he turned on the right and on the left, wherever faith had brought a poor cripple or a blind man, to lay them at his feet, and gave them sight and soundness. This only served to swell still higher the tide of devout and joyous feeling in some hearts, and to increase the hatred and envy in others. For many months now he had been going about among the people of that nation, speaking as never man

spake, exhibiting a control over the powers of nature as wonderful in its simplicity and ease of manifestation, as it was beneficent in its results. The land was full of the fame of him. Travellers from one part of the country carried the report to another of his mighty works, only to be told of similar deeds among those to whom they brought the report. Men were grouped in the places of public resort to describe what they had seen and heard. Children sat entranced as their mothers described the gentle, holy, majestic being that had come among them to scatter blessings. Whenever they felt themselves to be safe from the frown of scribe and priest, the people dared to believe, and say, "This is the promised Son of David, Zion's king, her long-expected Messiah." And what parents dared to say under shelter of the domestic roof, the children dared to shout within the hallowed walls of the temple. Beholding the Lord surrounded with the grateful group to whom he had just restored their long-lost powers of sight and walking, their enthusiasm could contain itself no longer; and, forming themselves into an impromptu volunteer choir, they made the temple resound with an anthem it had never heard before. Catching the strain which the multitude had poured forth on the way to the temple, they echoed its burden — Hosanna to the Son of David.

Whatever the Lord did and said in Jerusalem, publicly, was in sight and hearing of some of the rulers of the church. The Scribes and Pharisees had witnessed this wonderful procession, when Jesus rode on an ass' colt to the temple amid

the acclamations of the people, who strewed their cloaks and branches of trees in his path. They had seen him enter the temple with the authoritative air of its proprietor, and with irresistible command bid them who profaned its courts to quit the sacred premises. They witnessed these wonderful works of mercy and authority. And now, to crown all, they heard the hosannas of the children. Their envy and hatred could bear no more. But what resort or relief had they? There was probably no statute against these proceedings of Christ, or those of the people. All they could do was, to appeal to the Lord himself, and ask him if he heard these things. This is as much as to say: "Can you possibly sanction this fanaticism?—senseless children calling you the Son of David, and crying to you for mercy; thus really making you to be the Messiah!"

To this remonstrance the Lord replied simply by a quotation from their own Scripture, taking it from the Greek version, with which they were familiar: "Have ye never read" that eighth Psalm? Yes, they had read it; but had never stopped to discover that that verse contained a principle which undermined their whole system of religion. "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise." He had before driven out the wealthy abusers of the temple, that he might welcome to it the poor and suffering. Now he takes part with the children against the scribes. And never were children better employed; and never children on earth more honored than these, by the Lord's commendation of them. Some suppose that David composed the eighth Psalm

in reference to those acclamations of the women and children which greeted his triumph over Goliah, and which so provoked the envy of Saul. If so, there was a peculiar force in its being quoted on this occasion. Be that as it may, it presents to us the Saviour and the Gospel in a very interesting and instructive light, to hear from his lips this commendation of the praises and homage of children, by a quotation from the Old Testament.

The first lesson we may draw from it is that

I. THE GOSPEL EXHIBITS THE CONDESCENSION AND GENTLENESS OF THE SAVIOUR.—Parents, almost without exception, have loved their own children. But children, as a portion of the human family, have not generally been regarded with much interest; and particularly as religious beings, or in their spiritual relations. These priests and scribes probably supposed that children could not know enough to be religious; and especially to form an accurate judgment of the claims of Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah. And never, I believe, except under the Jewish and the Christian dispensations, has any prominence been given to the religious culture of children, or much regard paid to their religious character and worship. The source of this indifference is the radical misapprehension of the nature of religion. While it contains a system of truth which requires the fullest exercise of the most cultivated mind for its comprehension, it at the same time consists, as a practical principle of character and action, in feelings and purposes to which a little child is just as competent as a man; and to

the existence and exercise of which, childhood presents fewer obstacles than manhood.

Now, if we look at the systems of philosophy which men have invented, the arts and sciences which have given splendor to the states that possessed them,— if we look at the men who are aspiring to be the world's admiration, or the world's benefactors,— rarely shall we find them turning their attention and their efforts to human nature in its period of weakness and ignorance; much less glorying in their special adaptedness to children, and counting among their noblest trophies the children they have brought under the control of their systems. And even now you shall find the majority of men count, as of little worth, the manifestation of religious sentiments in children. Turn, then, from all this haughtiness of the human heart, all this loftiness of pretension, all this false dignity, and see the Son of God before and after his incarnation, in his treatment of children, and his estimate of their religious feelings and services.

1. *They are prominently noticed by their Creator and Saviour, as objects of religious interest.* — A casual reader might pass by this feature of the Saviour's character. But it presents itself with sufficient frequency to make a strong impression, if we observe the cases. He not only compares those who believe in him to children, and his affection for them to a parent's love; but he also rebukes with indignation those who thought it could be a matter of no importance that they should be brought to receive his blessing, declaring that there were already many such in the kingdom he came to estab-

lish. He, who never performed an idle ceremony, spake an unmeaning word, nor pretended to anything he did not truly feel, took little children in his arms, and blessed them. And was there ever a sublimer spectacle than when Redeeming Love there stood, enfolding in its tender embrace poor, sinful, sorrowing, perishing human nature in its feeblest estate ! He was not unobservant of their plays in the market-place, as he passed through their thronged streets ; and he made their games and their childish complainings the ground of illustrating the inconsistency of that generation of men, in their treatment of John and himself. When he would rebuke the ambition and envy of his disciples, a little child was the text from which his sermon was preached ; and some of the very characteristics which distinguish childhood from manhood were made the types of that piety he commended. And in the case we are considering, he accepted from children the praises which gave to him divine honors, when men counted his pretensions blasphemous.

Notice, too, a still more impressive fact. When the Son of God was to become a man, he chose not to enter, like Adam, at once into the possession of manhood.

2. *He became a child.* — I know not how to speak on the infinite condescension and goodness displayed in this fact. But it is one on which our minds may with profit dwell frequently and long. “ Why,” says Jeremy Taylor, “ should Christ be an infant, but that infants should receive the crown of their age, the purification of their stained nature, the sanctification of their person, and the saving of their souls,

by their infant Lord, and elder brother?" "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself." "Because the children had flesh and blood, he likewise took part of the same." Herein was love. Man begins his existence in a feebleness, a dependence, a subjection, in which he is inferior to plants and brutes. To that feebleness, dependence, and subjection, to all that inferiority, the Lord of glory stooped when he would save us. There are trials, sorrows, pains, and fears, incidental to childhood. These our Redeemer would know by experience, and therefore "he was born of woman," and "wrapped in swaddling-clothes;" was "subject to his parents," and "waxed in wisdom and in stature," to boyhood, and to manhood. Thus has he sanctified every position of our fallen nature, from its cradle to its grave. Thus has God exhibited his condescension, and the gentleness of his love, to a degree which will forever grow upon our admiring vision, but never be fully understood by us or any other creatures.

His condescension and gentleness are further seen in

3. *The provisions made in the Gospel for the spiritual benefit of children.*—Their position in the system of redemption is really a prominent one. There are ordinances constructed specifically in reference to them. Under the Old Testament there was a sign and seal of their covenant relation to God; and under the New Testament is baptism their right, having the same signification and end. The Christian government of parents is one of God's chief ordinances for the education and discipline of children. Within the

sacred enclosure of the family they are required to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." And the obligations laid on parents are among the weightiest which men are called to bear. "I know Abraham," said Jehovah, when assigning a reason why he should be peculiarly blessed, "that he will command his household after him." And on Eli fell the heaviest judgments, because he had deprived his children of the benefits of a faithful parental government. Such is Jehovah's care of these tenderest years of man's earthly existence. And when the canon of Old Testament prophecy is to be closed, we are informed that the sign of the brighter day about to dawn at length upon this blighted earth is this: "the hearts of the fathers shall be turned to the children." The introduction of that day will witness a new, profound, and enlightened Christian interest in the young.

We further see that much of the instruction of the Scriptures is designed for children. "Secret things," says Moses, "belong to the Lord our God; but the things that are revealed, to us and our children, that we may do all the works of his law." The Israelites were enjoined to repeat to their children the history of God's providence, his laws, and his promises. And this was not to be an occasional exercise, for it is enjoined upon parents thus: "Thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children." And then they were enjoined to place them within reach of their children, and to make a large part of the family conversation turn on these sublime themes.

We find, moreover, that special commands, counsels, warn-

ings, and encouragements, are addressed to children. One commandment out of the ten in the decalogue is peculiarly the child's commandment; and frequently is it enjoined in a separate form, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord." The book of Proverbs may be called emphatically the young man's own book. With the tenderness of a human father, God there warns and remonstrates, and allures to wisdom's path, by the most beautiful and precious promises.

There is also a place assigned to children in the worship of God. Under the Old Testament they were to be twice presented to God in their infancy. Then, at twelve years of age, the boys were led up to the great festival of the Passover, when they were to participate with their parents and countrymen; and special pains were required in explaining to them the meaning of the ceremonies. When the enraptured Palmists is summoning the universal choir to celebrate the praises of the Lord, he calls on "old men and children" together. When Joel summons the sinful nation to assemble themselves with fasting and prayer, he thus issues his proclamation: "Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts." Why these little creatures yet without intelligence? Because "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou perfectest praise."

And, again: we find that special notice is taken of their piety; and biographical sketches of children are frequent in the Bible. Moses' birth and early vicissitudes, Joseph's

piety and trials, are sketched with the most entire simplicity; and yet they have awakened, for more than three thousand years, the most lively interest in the minds of children of the Jewish and of every Christian nation. The early piety of Samuel, of David, of Obadiah, of Daniel, of John, and of Timothy, are all deemed worthy of mention or description in the sacred records.

This feature of the Gospel appears in another form also.

4. *God's esteem for the piety and worship of children is particularly expressed.* — We are struck with the manner in which they are noticed. There are at least three emphatic forms in which this is showed. The praises of little children are joined with the sublime chorus of creation. “O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth ! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.” Here, the Psalmist, full of the magnificent conceptions that he evidently possessed, even in that age, of the grandeur as well as beauty of the heavens, interrupts his description of the glory of the Creator as manifested in the heavens, and adds, “Out of the mouth of babes hast thou ordained strength.” Then he resumes his theme: “When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, what is man !” Another emphatic passage is that in which it is mentioned, the Lord “rejoiced in spirit.” I do not remember that it is said on any other occasion ; and that occasion the sacred narrator thus describes : “In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed

them unto babes; even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." I do not question that he uses the word "babes" here figuratively, as descriptive of his disciples. But this is the precise point I am aiming to show: that it is not the might of human intellect and extent of acquisition that God supremely regards in man as a religious being, but it is by retaining the simplicity of purpose, the self-distrust, the sense of dependence, the docility, the susceptibility and receptivity of right impressions, which distinguish childhood, that man is best fitted to serve God. So that whenever a child does exhibit piety, or sincerely praise God, his Creator, so far from despising it, rejoices in it. It may seem to man a small thing that a little child bows his knees and calls on his heavenly Father, thanking him for giving him a good earthly father and mother, and asking for a good heart; but he whose thoughts are as high above ours as the heavens above the earth, regards it not so. It may seem to man a matter of little moment that two or three children should meet and talk of Jesus and heaven, and praise him together; but Jesus regards it otherwise.

The other emphatic notice of children's worship is in that expression in the eighth psalm: "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength;" or (as rendered in the Septuagint, and by our Saviour) "perfected praise, because of thine enemies; that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger." Praise is, then, imperfect, unless children have a part in it. The praises of a family are not complete until the children join. There are reasons why

they should take a part. God has blessed them ; and when the hymn rises from the assembled family, they should be heard too, uttering their thankful voices. The praises of the church are incomplete without the children ; for praise, like the music that utters it, may utter in solitude by melody the grateful and adoring feelings of one heart. But when many come to join, then you want not only the different register or scale of sounds adapted to age and sex, but you want also harmony, or the various parts. Some, indeed, think that it would be better if music had only unison, or one part ; but such persons cannot claim to have obtained that idea either from divinely appointed religious music, from the very capacities which the Creator has given to man as a musical being, or from a survey of that nature which perpetually praises God, blending ocean's solemn cadence with the rising scale of the winds, the even murmur of the pine-forest with the twitter of the swallow, and the canary-bird's trill.

The public praises of Jehovah call for the blending of the graver bass with its appropriate movement, the tender or cheerful soprano, and the intermediate expressions of tenor and alto. It seems to be to just such a choral distribution that the Psalmist refers, when he says, "Both young men and maidens, old men and children, let them praise the name of the Lord." "To still the enemy and the avenger." What stronger illustration of this could be given than is found in this case of the hostile scribes rebuked by the hosannas of children ! — "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." The learned

could see no evidence that their Messiah, their Jehovah, had come to his temple, and they murmured and scowled; but the children saw the God of salvation in that lowly form.—“This is our God, and we have waited for him.”

“Thou hast perfected praise.”—Other things being equal, a child’s praise is probably more complete than that of a man grown mature in unbelief before his conversion.

From this gentler aspect of the Gospel, then, we may readily pass to another reflection derived from this passage.

II. WE HAVE GREAT ENCOURAGEMENT TO LABOR FOR THE SPIRITUAL GOOD OF CHILDREN.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ, considered in two aspects, is full of majesty and vastness, and is infinitely removed from the feebleness and ignorance of man. Its revelations are of truths, which stand like pillars whose bases are in the depths of an infinite abyss, and whose capitals, at awful height, sustain the vast dome that spreads over the presence-chamber of the King of kings. No man, no angel, has measured their length or their diameter, has sounded to the place where they press their awful weight, or reached their empyreal summits. And it is also true that the Gospel contains the vast powers that are to mould and quicken society, after they shall first have dashed to pieces and crumbled to dust every mountain that obstructs Christ’s universal dominion. Yet it remains true that not so many of the mighty, noble, or wise in worldly wisdom, as of the simple and unlearned, have received that Gospel with faith in it, as the wisdom and power of God unto salvation.

Its great truths are formed to the simplest apprehension of him who sincerely seeks God. They are addressed, at first, supremely to man's moral rather than his intellectual nature; though, when once in the heart, they greatly quicken and nourish the understanding. The essential doctrines lie within the intellectual range of children, and are apt to find less formidable opposition in their moral nature than in that of adults. They can believe that a great Being made everything,—that it is a wicked heart in them that does not love him, and that becomes angry, is cruel, selfish, deceitful, disobedient. They can understand that Jesus was more than man or angels; that he came to make us good, and to forgive us; that God sustains us; that he hears prayer; that we must be sorry for our sins; that we must believe that Christ will do as he says. These vital doctrines are addressed, not to the vigor of the intellect, but to the sense of littleness, want, dependence, guilt; and to gratitude.

The declaration made by our Lord, that "of such is the kingdom of heaven," was designed to be, and has been, the source of great encouragement to all who know the importance of an early subjection of the human will to God's authority. It means, both that the subjects of the new kingdom are actually taken from that rank of human beings, and that there are fewer embarrassments in a child's conversion than in that of an adult. The man is to unlearn, and undo, and get back; to start from the position he occupied as a child. Neither the child nor the adult is by nature in that

kingdom ; but the latter must become "as a little child," that he may enter it.

We may inquire how these children were led to praise the lowly Jesus thus ; and the almost unquestionable answer is, they had been taught it at home. Had it been the mere ebullition of childish feeling, and the imitation of older persons, our Saviour would not have noticed it with such honor ; but these children had probably had a reverence for this lowly but beneficent personage inspired at home ; and, now that the spark of gratitude in the persons healed fell on this tinder, it quickly kindled. Their reverence and sympathy were checked by no artificial notions, worldly plans, and selfish jealousies.

"Mere knowledge makes us keen and cold,
And cunning dwarfs the mind,
As more and more the heart grows old
With feelings base and blind.
Our light is clearer, but our love is less,
And few the hearts that we can bless."

"Of such is the kingdom of heaven." In confirmation of this, we refer to what has now become a vast range of children's biography ; ridiculed by a pharisaic wisdom, and frowned upon by a self-inflated dignity, but watched with joy by angels' eyes.

It was not in vain that Watts wrote hymns for children. Raikes, in founding the Sunday-school, performed a work more magnificent in its results than many most magnified by historians.

They that look upon children as mere toys, have not the view that Christ had; for he regarded them as religious beings. They that are indifferent to the moral and religious impressions made by themselves and others on children have not learned of him. It is fearful to see how careless some parents are in this matter, and that under the light of the Gospel. Juvenal, a heathen poet, could say, in reference to parents' uttering wicked language in presence of their children, "Magna debetur puero reverentia," — "Great reverence is due to a child." And the sentiment has a profound meaning. Reverence is due to his responsibility and destiny, and to the influence he may hereafter exert on others.

XI.

FASTING.

"This kind can come forth by nothing but prayer and fasting."—
Mark 9: 29.

WE shall never have exhausted the four gospels; to say nothing of the other sections of the holy writings; but shall die, like Isaac Newton, comparing what he knew with what he did not know of God's works, and exclaiming, "To myself I seem to have been as a child playing on the sea-shore, while the immense ocean of truth lay unexplored before me."

Here we see the glory of the Son of God contrasted with the misery of sinful man. On the one side, the Redeemer, speaking, from the fulness of his heart, on his great sacrifice for man's welfare; on the other, a demon, tormenting and seeking to destroy a poor lad. On which feature of this scene could we ponder without a fresh interest, a new impulse of affection and gratitude?

But we pass by all the others at this time, to dwell on one remark, and on the circumstances which called it forth. In the absence of the Lord, the nine disciples were put to a severe proof, which manifested the weakness of their faith. One of Satan's angels had taken possession of a young man,

and subjected him to horrible suffering, and often nearly destroyed him. The afflicted father, hearing the fame of Jesus, brought the boy to the disciples. They tried their skill upon the case, and found it insufficient; and when the Lord himself came down to the foot of the mountain, the father approached him, and told his piteous story, remarking that the disciples had failed to cast out the demon. After the Saviour had healed the youth, and the disciples were left alone with the Master, they inquired why they had not been able to overcome the devil. Jesus replied (as you may see in Matt. 17) that it was on account of their unbelief; for "this kind can come forth by nothing but prayer and fasting." Here was a demon of extraordinary strength, and he could be vanquished only by extraordinary prayer and fasting. Then our Saviour clearly teaches that

Fasting is connected with extraordinary spiritual attainments and achievements. — These disciples lacked the higher form of prayer, and its profounder spirit. There is a faith which removes mountains; a prayer that unlocks heaven, and vanquishes the powers of hell. But Christ here shows that they are connected with fasting.

I would, then, observe that

I. WE FIND THIS PRINCIPLE CONFIRMED BY THE WHOLE HISTORY OF FASTING, IN THE SCRIPTURES, AND IN THE CHURCH, FROM THE CHRISTIAN ERA DOWNWARD.

1. *We turn, first, to the Jewish church.* — It is not affirmed whether the patriarchs knew anything of fasting as a religious service; but Moses, in entering into the Mount,

to commune with God concerning the foundation of the Old Testament church, for forty days abstained from food,—of course by divine direction, and by miraculous aid. It is quite remarkable that the three persons who appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration had all performed this extraordinary fast of forty days,—Moses, Elijah, and Christ.

If, now, we look at the several occasions on which it was employed by the devout members and eminent leaders of the Jewish church, we shall receive a strong impression that it has some connection with the higher exercises, attainments, and achievements, of piety, or with cases of especial appeal to the Most High. Sometimes it accompanies deep sorrow, whether that be mere natural grief, an humble recognition of the divine chastisement, or a deeply-penitential sorrow for sin. When Saul was buried, having been the first King of Israel, and having been slain ingloriously, the people assembled to recover his insulted corpse, and decently inter it. Then they fasted seven days. When David's child was dangerously ill, he lay on his face, and mourned, with fasting and prayer. The Psalmist, speaking of the afflictions brought on him by his enemies, says, “I humbled my soul with fasting.” The great day of atonement, when the people brought their sins particularly to mind, was a day of fasting. In Joel's day, the people were called to assemble themselves, with fasting and weeping, to humble themselves before the judgments of God; and after the return from the captivity, we find their leaders, Nehemiah and Ezra, on several occasions calling them to fast, as a sign and aid of repentance.

Another use of it was to prepare the mind for specially intimate communion with God, or for very important service to the church. Moses performed that extraordinary fast when he was in that wonderful interview which produced the Mosaic institutions, and from which he came forth with the splendor of an angel radiating from his visage. When Daniel was about to receive a special communication relative to the destiny of the church, he spent six weeks in one form of fasting. Ezra's fasts had reference too to great reformations; and, in 1 Sam. 7:6, we find a fast to have been the first stage in one of those glorious revivals which refreshed and preserved the ancient church.

Another occasion was the looking to God for especial help. When the eleven tribes were driven to the necessity of punishing Benjamin, almost to extermination, they "went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the Lord, and fasted that day until even." So, when Haman had procured the terrible decree that was to annihilate the Jewish people, Esther, with her maids of honor, gave themselves to fasting and prayer for the deliverance of their people; and with what success, you remember. If we now follow the history of fasting into

2. *The times of Christ, the apostles, and the early Christian church,* we see it having the same solemn import and connections.—We begin with the great exemplar. Jesus did many things as a Jew, or a worshipper under the old theocracy, because that system was not yet abolished. In such matters he is not an example, only so far as the spirit

of obedience and order is concerned. But this fasting was not Jewish. It obeyed no law of Moses. It was human. It was spiritual in the highest degree, and a most fitting opening to his glorious ministry, and his wondrous life as the Saviour of men. When the apostles entered on their great work, we find fasting an exercise accompanying the most solemn function of their office,—the ordaining of preachers and pastors. Paul speaks of himself as being in fastings often. Sometimes it might be simply a consequence of his voluntary poverty, and the violence of opposition which he encountered. But he says that he and his fellow-ministers approved themselves to men by their fastings, among other things.

And, in accordance with this, there are two remarks which show the permanence of this exercise in the church. When the Pharisees inquire why Christ's disciples were not found fasting like John's, the Lord replied that the friends of the bridegroom were so joyous in his society that fasting would not be an appropriate expression of their feelings. But, he continues, the bridegroom will be taken away; the church is to pass through dark days, severe trials, dangerous service, and difficult work; then fasting will be appropriate to her circumstances and her feelings. And Paul makes such allusion to fasting in his instructions to the Corinthians, as shows that he regarded it as a permanent institution in the church.

After the apostolic times, the church preserved fasting; and, at length, when aiming to fix a uniform observance of

sacred seasons, she set apart the time supposed to be the same as that of our Saviour's fast and temptation in the wilderness, to be solemnized with the anniversary exercise of abstinence. And I believe all her eminent men, of every communion, have been distinguished for this exercise. I do not remember any of any age who considered it as obsolete or useless. Down to the time of the Reformation, no true Christian any more thought of neglecting fasting than prayer. After the Reformation we find two classes: those who chose to confound the Romish abuse with the institution itself, and so despised it; and those who practised it in primitive simplicity. And I repeat my impression that the men most eminent for piety, in every branch of the Protestant church, used this means of grace. What, then, is

II. THE NATURE OF FASTING AS A RELIGIOUS EXERCISE?

1. *It is a spiritual service.* — There is, indeed, an external part, like kneeling and speaking in prayer, which are very important; and, in some cases, indispensable. Yet in both cases we must carefully distinguish the essential from the circumstantial; the soul from the body. Externally it admits of several degrees, which are referred entirely to the judgment and conscience of each individual. There is a fasting which may be exercised daily; a keeping one's self from yielding too far to the pleasures of the table. There is an abstinence like Daniel's, for a season, from food as a source of pleasure, using only what will barely sustain life and strength. Then there is a total abstinence from all food and drink for a certain time. The rule here is one to be drawn

up conjointly by a heart desiring the greatest spiritual good, and a judgment estimating all the facts of the case. Let the fast be so strict as to bend in no degree to the love of food ; so lenient as not to injure health.

But, to make mere abstinence from food an end, is a senseless mockery, more worthy of a pagan than a Christian. “ Is it such a fast that I have chosen, saith the Lord ? a day for a man to afflict his soul ? ” A little different arrangement of the words would have made the sense more obvious, namely, “ Is this the fasting or day for soul-humbling that I have chosen ; the mere bowing down of the head like a bulrush, and spreading sackcloth and ashes under him ? ” No. He says : I require you to fast in spirit ; to cease from your injustice and cruelty. So that the abstinence from food, more or less rigid, is but a means to a spiritual end. It may often, indeed, be bodily beneficial to omit a meal, even in good health ; but that is not a religious service, it is a medical regimen.

2. *Fasting is in no way a meritorious service, nor a magical instrument.*—The Romish church has filled the world with delusions on this subject ; making its own members dupes, and other men mockers and sceptics. The whole value and efficacy of it depends upon the other points which we will now consider.

3. *It is the expression of an earnest religious purpose.*—The heart of him who fasts aright is, at the time, peculiarly concentrated. Some view of sin, some danger, some want, some pressure of responsibility, some momentous service for

God and the church about to be entered upon, some renewed earnestness in seeking the presence of the Most High, are the occasions of fasting described in Scripture, and in sacred biography. These are the elements of it. The heart is fixed on one great object, with peculiar earnestness of desire. Moses did not fast for the sake of laying up a store of merit for himself, or for some other person. The founding of God's church; the promulgation of Jehovah's law; the opening of a new stage in the work of redemption; these were the mighty charges lying on his soul. And he fasted, as a natural means of aiding his self-abasement and his spirituality of mind. So it was in every recorded case; something of peculiar importance peculiarly occupied the mind. And individuals or churches appointing fasts ought to see to it that they have some distinct and great object before them in the service, whether it be of repentance, humiliation under chastisement, seeking increase of graces, closer communion with God, or greater usefulness, the averting of some calamity, the enlargement and sanctification of the church. This earnestness of purpose is seen not only in being fixed on a definite object; but also in the consecration of time and person to that specific object. That is an eminent advantage. Our life is wasted with vague intentions and scattered labors; our consciences are cheated with good resolutions that we never find time to execute. A fast is a period specifically devoted to one object; and that, for the time, the most important to which that person can attend. By making the object definite, the mind is concentrated, clear, calm, and strong.

By fixing the purpose, the character is rendered firm. By executing it, the conscience assumes its proper ascendancy, and something definite is attained and accomplished.

There is gain in another direction by this setting apart time to accomplish a definite object. Hindrances are removed. There is some reason why every Christian does not grow in each feature of the divine image — why he does not execute his good purposes; there is some hindrance which, for want of a fixed attention, he may never have seen, or, for want of a fixed purpose, he may never have taken out of the way. Now he sets his heart earnestly on a great object. And the hindrances show themselves distinctly, and are taken in hand resolutely. This mere setting apart a specific season to accomplish a specific spiritual result, is like the case of a traveller who had always been walking sideways or backward toward the town he desired to visit. If he came against a post, he could not tell what it was, nor how to avoid it, his eyes not being in the right direction. Now he turns his face toward the city, and turns off his attention from diverting objects which heretofore were most in his thoughts. Now he knows whether the hindrance is a post or a fence, a rock or a hill, and he finds a way of avoiding it. A season of fasting, moreover,

4. *Is consonant with peculiar degrees of repentance.* — Repentance includes a distinct contemplation of our personal sins. To that, such a season is very favorable. It includes sorrow for sin. Indeed, the natural effect of sorrow is to diminish the appetite for food. When Saul was sore dis-

tressed, because the Philistines made war on him, and God had abandoned him, it is recorded, "He had eaten no bread, all the day, nor all the night." And the ship's company in which Paul was, "when no small tempest lay upon them, and all hope that they should be saved was taken away, continued fasting for fourteen days." Saul of Tarsus, when first awakened to the sense of his sins, being led blind into Damascus, "was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink." The Ninevites, knowing nothing of God but his indignation at their wickedness, humbled themselves at the call of his prophet, and fasted in their sorrow.

There is also in repentance a congeniality with fasting, because both express a kind of holy revenge against sin. Past ingratitude for God's goodness, a sensual attachment to his gifts, a perversion of them to idolatry and pride and selfishness, makes it suitable sometimes to say to the body, "There, thou shalt suffer now this privation, as a chastisement;" and to sin, "Thou hast conquered me by thy blandishments; now I will hold thee at bay through these bodily appetites, which are thy favorite instruments." Repentance is also the soul breaking itself loose from the world. And there is an appropriateness in setting apart a time in which the soul shall have no more to do with the material world than absolute necessity requires. "I keep my body under," said an eminent Christian hero.

5. *Fasting accords with a season set apart for peculiar efforts to attain to personal holiness.* — To some persons, I am aware, the physical part of fasting is not peculiarly

difficult. But, take it in its general feature, it is as an expression of suffering, more or less. And as such it is a link in a chain, a stage on the road toward holiness, to him who rightly employs it. The fathers called it "the nourisher of prayer, the restraint of lust, the wings of the soul, the diet of angels, the instrument of humility and self-denial, the purifier of the spirit." And St. Basil remarks, that "The paleness and meagreness of visage, in great mortifiers of self, is the mark in the forehead to which Ezekiel alludes." Sin, we know, is to be conquered, as it was atoned for, by suffering. God is calling us to a complete self-conquest. And self-denial is a feature of the Gospel system, prominent and fundamental. There is too a necessity that we make vigorous attacks on the strongholds of sin and Satan within us. We are sometimes like the King of Israel sending an army to suppress the rebellion. And, while making all this parade of sternness, he issues this order concerning the chief and soul of the conspiracy: "Deal gently, for my sake, with the young man, even with Absalom." A fast, to be genuine, presupposes that, although sin remains in the heart, the love of it is gone.

In part, our Saviour's fasting was not like ours. He had no sins to conquer. But he had a human nature to elevate spiritually. Who knows how much that human nature needed to be raised above its native state, to carry it to its perfection? The Captain of our salvation was "made perfect through suffering." The critics say it was an official perfection. It was that, and perhaps more. As his human nature admitted of growth in quantity, it might also in quality,

without derogating from its purity. His long fast may have had reference to this end. It was, doubtless, a means which his holy human nature needed for the highest communion with the Godhead, as well as to be an example to his church ; showing his followers that the road to high attainments and results is through suffering and self-abasement. Then, says one, “let us follow Christ, though at a distance ; for, if we may but touch the hem of his garment by the small beginnings of a faithful imitation, we shall find a virtue coming out from him, to the curing of the malady of sin and of its bloody issue.”

6. *Fasting agrees, too, with the peculiar exercise of love to Christ.* — He peculiarly desires that we remember his sufferings. “Do this in remembrance of me.” His fasting was a part of his suffering, and a part in which we can imitate and share with him. His divine nature enabled him to bear suffering, but it did not diminish, probably increased, his sensibility to it. This we ought to study at every point of its manifestation, especially as it is so opposed to all our natural tendencies. We must, by any and all means, become serious in our apprehension of the evil of sin, and the power of Satan. We must learn that the plague is deep and malignant ; that there is a “kind” which will hold their position long. Jesus fasted and wept, watched, agonized, and prayed, in reference to them. We must be baptized with his baptism, and drink of his cup. There is thus

7. *A peculiar fitness in making a fast to accompany our peculiar onsets on Satan’s kingdom.* — The first thing

we need, in waging the battles of the Lord, is to believe that there are any battles to fight; that Satan and his demons are realities. Then we need to know that they are too formidable for us; and yet that they are not invincible. This kind can be driven forth, but it must be "by fasting and prayer." We can become the organs of the Spirit of God by fasting and prayer. If Satan is mighty in resisting, we can be "strong in the power of the Lord, and of his might." We are first ourselves to break from all allegiance to him. And fasting is one means of effecting that. Eating was the first outward act by which man symbolized and expressed his allegiance to Satan. And there seems to be a peculiar fitness in his sometimes recalling that fact, and refusing to eat for a season. Satan, in his great attack on our Lord, appears to have made the common mistake about the effect of fasting. If it were merely a bodily exercise, it would expose men to his temptations. But, when used as a spiritual exercise, he finds himself weak before the little ones of Christ. He came to the king himself at the end of the fast, as the most favorable time for his attack. But he found the spirit prepared for him, in whatever condition the body may have then been.

We must look to God in our attacks on Satan. And religious fasting is an acceptable service. He accepted it of Moses and Nehemiah, of Jesus and of the apostles. And we may suppose that they who attack the strongest demons will be most rewarded. The essence of this exercise, as a service to God, lies in the intention to seek and serve him in an especial manner, and to make a season unusually holy,

by separating one's self, as far as is possible and proper, from all earthly interests and enjoyments. Here is its chief value, in this purpose and the earnestness of it. Without that, the day is gloomy, and full of headache and discouragement; with it, the day is ethereal, heavenly. It is very evident, too, from the case before us in the text, that we may fast and pray in reference to the good of others, as well as ourselves.

We see how the church is to become efficient. — Her attainments are low and limited, and so are her achievements; because her aims are low, her faith weak, her self-denial a name. She must aim higher, and her trust must be alone in God. How vain is much of her hope! Fine buildings, architecture, the talents of her preachers, wealth accumulating in her coffers, the favor of the wealthy, numbers and worldly influence,—to these multitudes are looking. But the kind that has possession of the world now “cometh not out” by any nor all of these. We must go downward rather than upward. We must see what kind of meetings we have when fasting and praying are the work in hand, to judge of our real power and progress.

And is there now no call for private and social fasting, to be accompanied with peculiarly earnest prayer? Is not Satan in greatest power when his power is least dreaded? Are there not demons of pride, and avarice, and lust, and unbelief, that will go out by no other means now, as in the former days?

XII.

PAUL'S REVIEW OF HIS LIFE.

"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."—2 Tim. 4: 6—8.

THUS Paul wrote to Timothy, about thirty years after he was converted. He had begun his new course, clear in his perceptions of the work to be done, prompt and firm in his purpose to do it; and we now look with deep interest to the end of it. The review of one's life is always a serious matter, if honestly performed. But here is a review of more than ordinary interest. It is made by a man of extraordinary piety and good sense; a man eminently distinguished of Heaven in the mode of his conversion, in the office conferred on him, and in the blessing crowning his labors; a man now on the isthmus between his labors and their issues in eternity; a man relating his experience, and uttering his hopes, under the guidance of inspiration.

He informs us that

I. THE PAST FILLED HIM WITH SATISFACTION.—It was

not that he had never been a transgressor of God's law, or had ever perfectly conformed to its requirements; but the main current of his life since his conversion, the fixed purpose of his heart, the influence he had exerted on human thought, feeling, character, and destiny, gave him great satisfaction. He views his life under three aspects:

1. *He had been a warrior.* — And his contest was with no phantom or abstraction; not with a mere principle of evil, employed without will or intelligence, but with a real enemy. Paul evidently acted continually under the impression that he was in an enemy's country, — that he was watched by an invisible foe, resisted by a being mightier than priest or prince. "We wrestle not," he says, "against flesh and blood, but against principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickednesses in high places." He recognized a terrible unity in sin, — an energy and ubiquity which are angelic. He considered himself an officer in an army which has regiments contending in battle-fields far away from this earth. He was not chief in this war, though chief in the visible army. The Captain under whom he fought was not seen on earth, but King in heaven. The captain with whom he contended he called, on account of his invisible presence, "Prince of the power of the air."

Paul's enemy was God's enemy. He had no quarrels of ambition, or revenge, or covetousness, or pride, to settle. His eye was fixed on the prince who led the revolt in heaven, and had brought it down to earth. Against him Paul proclaimed an open and uncompromising war, — a war of exter-

mination ; and he extended it to everything that enlisted under Satan. Hence it began in his own heart, against the traitors long entertained there ; and with them he proclaimed an unrelenting war. Every thought must be brought into captivity to Christ, with every affection, every purpose, and power of the soul. Whatever, then, there was in Saul of pride or passion, of selfishness or worldliness, must find from Paul no favor nor leniency ; and whatever system of philosophy or religion, whatever institution or person, was engaged to destroy the kingdom of his Lord, to prevent its supremacy in the world, or to rival the glory of Christ, he contended with in the same spirit. Read, in the Acts of the Apostles, and Paul's Epistles, how constantly he was maintaining the truth of the Gospel, the purity of the church, and the faith of believers, in opposition to the powerful attacks of wicked men. He reckoned those who persecuted him in the same class with the men who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets. This, then, made it a good fight. It was a resistance only to evil ; a defense only of righteousness and truth ; a contest for the glory of God, and the good of men. It was a good fight, too, in its mode and spirit. He displayed in it eminent courage, bearding the lion in his den. His chief labors were in the great cities of the Roman empire ; and it is most interesting to see this little, feeble man drawing his blade upon the champions of every false system of thought, and every institution in which Satan was intrenched. Men have gazed with admiration on Napoleon, rushing from France to Italy, to Egypt, to Germany, to Spain, to Russia ; strug-

gling, and that successfully, against the mighty powers of the continent. But there was one mightier whom he never attacked. He never besieged a fortress in England, and yet England contained the seat of the power which could defeat all his plans. But Paul, as a captain, had a higher kind of ubiquity than this wonderful man. He vanquished Judaism in Jerusalem. He met the idolatry of Grecian Asia at Ephesus. He penetrated Corinth, the stronghold of pagan luxury. He met the philosophy of Greece in Athens, and the whole power of paganism at Rome, its political capital. No mighty army executed his plans, and defended his person. No enthusiastic nation sustained him. He knew and contended with every heresiarch that troubled the church. He had no fear of priest or proconsul, — of a Jewish mob, or a Roman emperor. He counted not his life dear to him. If the earthly hero equalled him there, yet he sinks into littleness by his ambition. True heroism consists in reaching that point of courage by absorption in a public interest greater than the personal interest he jeopardizes. But his courage was not rash, for he was wonderfully patient. He could wait for results and deliverances. His advice to Timothy was copied from his own life : “Thou, therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” “I suffer trouble as an evil-doer, even unto bonds ; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sake.” When suffering could promote the cause, he suffered cheerfully ; when action was wanted, he was among the most active. Without this disregard to self, no one can fight the

good fight. They will be either remiss when activity is demanded, or impetuous when patience is strength, and suffering is victory. But so Paul fought, sometimes in earnest debate, sometimes in fervent preaching; quite as often in meek endurance, patient suffering, and solitary prayer.

He fought, therefore, with the right weapons; his reliance was mainly on these—the truth of the Gospel, the power of example, the prayer of faith. Never did man more scrupulously obey the rules of this holy war, or more skilfully employ these holy weapons. He showed men how to be Christians. He fought against their prejudices by his life; he attacked their consciences with the Gospel, which he calls “the sword of the Spirit.” And then he turned back to him with whom is the residue of the Spirit, to bring down that mighty power of God which gives the victory. This was his good fight; not a contest against right, freedom, or innocence; not conducted selfishly nor cruelly; not with weapons of death; but against falsehood, sin, and Satan; not for a party, a name, a man, a country; but for God, for eternal principles. He found the fortresses of Satan at Thessalonica, at Jerusalem, at Philippi, at Corinth, at Athens, at Rome. He entered them all, like David meeting Goliah, in the strength of Israel’s God. Idols trembled, and priests turned pale before him. His was a good fight. No hero of earth had ever such right to exult in the review of his conflicts and his victories.

Thus was Paul a warrior; and yet, while so much of his life might be embraced under that figure, it was not all.

2. *He had been a racer, also.*—The Greeks were a remarkable people; brought by Providence on the stage of action to introduce a new phase of civilization, and a new development of the human faculties. They gave great prominence to the education of the body; associating with it the religious sentiments, the social and patriotic feelings, and the highest intellectual exercises and enjoyments. Their games were among the mightiest instruments of their national cultivation. Their periodical recurrence moved the enthusiasm of the Grecian states and colonies, and drew admiring spectators from remote parts of the earth. They had none of the low associations of our modern games, nor all of the demoralizing tendency of modern theatres. They were, therefore, most appropriate to the illustration of those lofty aspirings and efforts to which the Gospel calls men. “I have finished my race,” says Paul. “I entered the course thirty years ago; and now the goal has come in sight; a few more steps, and I shall seize the prize.”

What was the goal? It was, to attain and accomplish the highest ends man can seek; the highest personal perfection consistent with being on earth; attaining, as he styles it, “to the resurrection of the dead;” the exalting Christ among men; the leading men to him; the confirmation of the churches in their faith; the leaving behind him writings which should be the means of glorifying God, edifying his people, and converting men, to the end of time. He had aimed at these achievements; and, by the grace of God, he had accomplished them. It was a vast work; but it was now

finished. He had been intensely active; but the time of rest was now come. He had started, Saul the young, impetuous, bold, and brave; now he closes his course, Paul the aged, calm, gentle, and hopeful. It is the same spirit, and a noble spirit, that acts in two such opposite ways; making its possessor all enthusiasm and energy when work is to be done, all quietness and composure when suffering is to be borne; that is the true spirit that knows how to work, and how to rest; how to do, and how to endure; how to live, and how to die.

What is this spirit? It finds the course it is to run, the end it is to seek, the principles on which it is to act. Many act from impulse, custom, and slavish imitation, all their lives. If they run a race, it is not their own; they do not seek, at the right sources, what they were made for. Every one has an individual constitution entirely peculiar, and adapted to particular ends. By this, Providence has fitted that person to attain to personal perfection, to glorify God, and to benefit the world in a particular way. And no one finds that way without a spirit of unreserved consecration; a renouncement of all selfish and worldly ends; an honest and earnest proposal of the inquiry which Saul presented to him who alone can answer it, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" "I run," says Paul, "not as uncertainly." The ends I am seeking are those which my Creator sought in giving me being; those my Redeemer sought in purchasing me with his precious blood. I have chosen them in view of God's will, and of their own intrinsic importance. They are the principles that lie at the basis of my life. I respect

them, I reverence them, I make everything bend to them. Besides this distinct election of the right objects to live for, or the right motives of action, there is a firmness and steadiness of will or purpose which is implied in a successful finishing this course. He who thus finishes his course is not governed by his feelings or his frames. Depressed or cheerful, well or ill, in favor or out of favor, he presses toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God; laying aside every weight, he runs with patience. And then there is another rule of the sacred Olympics: not only must the athlete keep his body under, but he must look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." But faith rests, as its ultimate exercise, in the almighty Saviour. "Not I," says Paul, "but the grace of God, which was with me. What I am, I am by the grace of God." He prays for the Ephesians, that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith.

He then gives us another view of his life, under the figure of a trusteeship or stewardship.

3. *He had been a steward.* — His life presented in this aspect a trust discharged. "I have kept the faith."

A trust implies two parties: one intrusting, the other receiving the deposit, or charge. Who, then, committed to Paul the sacred interest he had so faithfully kept? The answer is found in many passages. When Saul yet lay blind in a house in Damascus, the Lord Jesus said to Ananias, concerning him, "He is a chosen vessel unto me, to

bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." He speaks of his ministry thus: "The ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God." When he was stricken to the earth, on the road to Damascus, he cries to Jesus, "Lord, what wilt thou have me do?" He calls himself a servant of Jesus Christ, an apostle, missionary, or ambassador. "We are ambassadors for Christ." He, therefore, regarded himself as intrusted by the Lord Jesus with a treasure that he must most sacredly guard; and that treasure was the Gospel. How he understood the Gospel, we can learn in the fullest manner from the Scriptures. We have, besides many casual remarks, no less than five of his sermons reported at greater or less length, and fourteen letters or essays from his hands; and the burden of them all is the theme with which he commenced his ministry in Damascus, preaching Christ, that he is the Son of God; "opening and alleging from the Scriptures that Christ must have suffered and risen again from the dead;" "testifying repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus."

From Christ he received it in charge to make men know what he had done to save them, and what they must do that he might save them.—"We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord." The great facts and principles of redemption were committed to him, to believe them, to manifest their power in his own experience, to preach them to mankind, and commit them to writing. He was thus to

present to men, and to perpetuate to all future generations, the doctrines, practice, and spirit, of the Gospel.

How did he discharge that trust? Faithfully. In regard to his own soul, he knew that he, as a man, must take the same care of it as the obscurest believer, of his. His talents, his apostleship, would not make any less necessity for vigilance and care. Hence, we find many evidences of his minute fidelity as a Christian. “I keep my body under,” he says. “Forgetting the things which are behind, I count not myself to have attained.” To notice only one particular: he was peculiarly exposed to pride, from his position and his success. But he could call the Ephesian pastors to witness, “Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been among you at all seasons; serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews.” And thus it was in regard to every grace of the spirit; he had preserved them with great vigilance and prayerfulness. “I have kept the faith;” I have not swerved from the doctrine, the precept, or the spirit, of the Gospel of my Lord.

He had been a faithful guardian, likewise, of the truth. Scarcely had he received the truth, before he began to proclaim it in Damascus. He preached the crucified one in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. And he “increased in strength, confounding the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ;” probably even then wielding some of those powerful arguments which are found in the epistles to the Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews.

But this required a great degree of self-denial. He was told that he could do this work only through great suffering. And, from the very opening of his ministry, he began to drink of his Master's cup, and share his baptism. From first to last, he remained in the state of mind expressed in the text : “ I am ready to be offered.” “ Since truth requires her champion to be a martyr, I have laid myself on the altar, and I am ready to have the axe descend upon the victim. Death, tortures, contempt, in Christ’s behalf, have no terrors to me. I count not my life dear to me, so that I might 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.”

He had other men’s souls in trust. The faith he kept was to save them ; and he spared no labor, nor shunned any danger, that he might communicate to them the precious boon. He kept the faith ; not in mere guardianship, but with the fidelity of a guardian intrusted with property to be wisely applied to the good of his wards.

He had especially the church in trust. The faith or Gospel he held for her benefit. For her sake he defended it against all invaders. He bore the reproach to which it was subject ; he watched over the whole body ; for, “ the care of all the churches” came on him ; and, at the same time, he cared for the weakest and obscurest of the flock. To keep the faith, or the truth, and to administer it in due season to every man and every church, was his commission ; and well

might he say, "I have kept the faith." And from this review of his life he looks forward to

II. A FUTURE FILLED WITH BLESSEDNESS.

He had honored his Redeemer, and he knew that Christ would honor him. He looked for "a crown." It has been a common thing in the world's history to contend for a crown. The Christian hero here stands on the level of the earthly hero. But, when we come to compare the nature of these respective crowns, the character of their conflicts, and the umpires to whom the warriors look, the Christian rises to an elevation infinitely above the earthly hero. The former fights the good fight of faith; pure in its motive, pure in all its processes, blessed in all its results. He looks for a crown of righteousness, or the appropriate reward of righteous actions springing from righteous principles; and he looks, not to a frantic mob, or an erring mortal, but to the Lord, the Judge, the Righteous. There is nothing selfish in the war, the victory, nor the coronation. The conquered are all to be crowned with their Conqueror; and "all them also that love his appearing." That day, that glorious day, when every faithful warrior, racer, and steward, will be honored and rewarded, Paul had then full in view.

To every man there must be a specific work assigned.

— Nothing can be made in vain by a wise Creator. Paul's work may be more vast and magnificent than yours or mine, but more real or distinct it cannot be. Like Paul, each of us has a battle to fight, a race to run, a trust to discharge.

And yet there is a variety in the details as great as the other personal varieties which distinguish us. All have an enemy to contend with. If we do not believe in his existence, of course he gains, by that alone, an immense advantage. Paul was ignorant neither of him "nor his devices." He has intrenchments in our hearts, and allies in our avocations, our friends, our amusements. We need courage, as Paul did, or we never shall overcome. We need to put on the whole armor of God, that we may withstand his assaults; and faith, that we may gain the victory. In some there will be sore conflicts with doubts; some, with passions; some, with sluggishness; some, with social influences; some, with business-snares; some, with pride; and some, with the love of money, enterprise, or power.

Every one must resist Satan. There is also a race set before each of us. The goal to which we are to run is an end worthy of man's highest affections, utmost energy, and of heaven's utmost aid. Our catechism expresses it in one good form: "The chief end of man is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever." Having chosen these ends to pursue, then we need energy and perseverance, like Paul's, in the pursuit of them.

Each of us has a trust committed to him. No other treasure can be so precious, no responsibility can be greater. Here each one is to be faithful.

But it is only in these general features that our duties and responsibilities can agree. There is an infinite variety in the detail. Nothing can be more personal and peculiar

than duty. And if we look through the biographies of the Bible, we shall be struck with the diversity of forms which duty takes. Adam had just one simple negative prescription, not to eat that fruit. Abel had to serve God unto martyrdom. Noah was placed where social influences were to be resisted. Enoch's trust was to warn a wicked world. Abraham's was to magnify faith under the severest tests. Job's was to illustrate patience. Jacob was to try the efficacy of prayer. Moses had a vast and complicate work to perform, of governing the church. And so it is through the Old and New Testaments. No two are placed in the same circumstances. And they accomplished their work best who best understood what they had to do, and who gave themselves fully to it.

What must any one, then, think of himself, who has no warfare with spiritual foes, no heavenly race to run, no trust from Christ? Surely he makes his life a blank, he neglects momentous trusts, and incurs terrible guilt.

There is a crown of righteousness for the faithful soldier, racer, and steward.—God has bound the present and the future together, and in this form. The soul out of Christ remains forever under the bondage of sin. The soul in Christ becomes in the end perfect. Degrees of fidelity to Christ determine the degree of future blessedness. Ancient nations bestowed various sorts of garlands, diadems, and crowns, on their victorious generals. Under this imagery Paul describes the blessedness he was anticipating. He had called his warfare a good fight. So he calls his coronation a

righteous one. His labors and sacrifices were in the cause of righteousness; and they would be acknowledged and rewarded by a righteous judge, so that none could challenge his right to receive them. It will not be demanded by justice that our poor sacrifices receive any reward. But it will be in strict accordance with justice that they be rewarded for Christ's sake. He that has fought God's enemies with courage shall be honored as a conqueror. He that has run God's appointed race shall receive the prize. The faithful steward, whose pound hath gained ten, shall be made ruler over ten cities. Whatever we have sacrificed or suffered for the Lord, he will recognize and recompense. Paul "became a fool" by opposing the wisdom of the world; his wisdom in this will there be acknowledged. He humbled himself here; he shall be exalted there. He gave up riches here; he shall have the wealth of heaven. And this crown, he says, will be shared by all who love the Lord's appearing. Ambition, envy, and selfishness, are to be slain by the cross of Christ. Each one will be conscious of the peculiar blessings he receives; but it will excite neither pride in him nor envy in others. Every soul will be full of love to Christ, and that will make its happiness complete.

Paul teaches us how to die. — He began to prepare for death by making right preparations for life. He renounced his natural relations to law, that he might be in Christ. He renounced his own will, and all selfish ends. He ascertained the work his Lord assigned him, then performed it in humble dependence and complete self-sacrificing. Some do not

even know their Master's will, much less perform it. Then he took a calm review of his life. Nothing can be more noble than his position between a life of devotedness to his Saviour and an eternity of blessedness. "I have fought," he says, recalling his conflicts, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." "I am ready to be offered." What a delightful sight, to behold a dying man manifest such an interest in his friends, and in the cause of Christ; such elevated composure and self-forgetfulness; such tender care of Timothy; such solicitude for the Gospel! That is a noble death. And when he has finished with earth, how triumphant are his anticipations! "The time of my departure is at hand." Like the strong, full-freighted ship in her harbor, going to distant lands, he seems to strain his cable, and longs to give his sails to the wind. "A crown of righteousness" is laid up for me,—I shall be among the crowned! What royal diadem is comparable to this?

XIII.

GLORY IN RESERVE.

"They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars, for ever and ever." — Dan. 12: 3.

THE sky is a magnificent object. Its deep blue vault is at once infinite and finite; a dome of awful height; and yet actually an illimitable space, to give the soul's wings room for a boundless flight. Then the morning, the mid-day, and the evening, all have their beauties; the day and the night, the summer, autumn, winter, and spring, ever varying the scene. The brightness of the firmament glowing with the mid-day sun gives way to the contrasted grandeur of a midnight sky, all gorgeous with its shining orbs.

This magnificent feature of creation has furnished the prophet of the Lord an illustration of the glory which awaits a certain part of the human race. A portion of this prophecy is supposed to embrace the period of persecution under the dynasty of the Maccabees, in which the prophet says, in the eleventh chapter, that "they that understand among the people shall instruct many; yet they shall fall by the sword and by flame, by captivity and by spoil." He seems to

come back to their ease in the passage now under our consideration; and to present to those who should persevere, under such discouragements, in teaching men the ways of piety, the most animating prospects. What if they should go to the stake and the scaffold, — another life is beyond, not to terminate. And there “they that be wise, or godly, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars.”

The text has a climactic description of heaven; first showing that

I. PIETY ALONE IS HONORED IN HEAVEN.—For men are removed to that blessed land, only as a reward of piety; and in heaven only piety will be honored.

1. *Being in heaven is itself the reward of piety*, as it is an expression of God’s approbation.—To be there, is proof of being fit to be there. It shows that God thus judges concerning the person; that his angels judge so likewise. And, besides expressing fitness, it will be an honor conferred, a reward of service.

John saw the dwellers in heaven as conquerors, wearing the badges of victory. They were the heroes of a hundred battles. Sometimes in solitary conflict with their fierce adversary, sometimes in the thick array of God’s holy army, they had fought for Christ and truth. To be there, is to receive the reward of faith, integrity, courage, and patience. It will be glory, immense glory, only to reach heaven; whether from the obscurest walks of life, or from the loftiest stations of the church militant. Merely to have that verdict of heaven for-

ever sealed, irrevocable, unquestioned, unchallenged, "This person is fit for heaven," is as much above all the glories of earth, as the approbation of God is above that of fallible man ; and that quality in man which is thus rewarded is, in distinction from everything else, piety. But it is more than this :

2. *The beauty of holiness will be there seen to constitute man's true glory.* — We can judge of man now but partially. He is fallen. His beauty is defaced ; his glory is dimmed. Everything else God has made, is perfect in its kind and place ; and when man shall recover his lost beauty, there will be great splendor. We catch glimpses of it in the smile of an infant ; the brightness of his reverential gaze when wonder and love sometimes fill his little heart. But in infant or man all good is in fragments. "When we see him (Christ), we shall be like him." There will be perfection ; the perfectly restored image of God. Each one will have the family-likeness, yet varied as the leaves of the forest. Each one will look like Jesus. His beauty will be the beauty of holiness ; which is love in place of selfishness. Here our beauty is either lost entirely in absolute selfishness ; recovered in mere imitation of a refinement and courtesy that substitute the grimace of benevolence for its life ; or, at best, but partially recovered. There love will be perfect. Whomsoever you meet there, you know there is not a contracted, selfish feeling in his heart. He loves the blessed God with a true, fervent, supreme love. He loves his fellows as himself. He lives for the general good, and counts the happiness of each his own. He is perfectly refined,

because he is perfectly considerate of the rights and feelings of each. It is the glory, too, of perfect obedience and loyalty. How beautiful a sight is a family in which every member cheerfully does the will of the head of that little empire! In heaven, each is loyal; no self-will mars its order. Every heart beats with a loyal zeal for the King's honor. Every one has each of his affections and faculties brought into perfect subjection to the supreme authority and will. That is a blissful state, and each member of that state is blessed. It is not the glory of successful ambition; it is marred by no fretting discontent, or self-obtruding forwardness. No guest at that feast has taken the highest seat, of his own will; but the Master has placed each higher than he thought he deserved, and said, "Friend, come up hither!" It is a glorious world, where there are no self-inflated dignities, no vain and shallow pretenders; where glory is recognized as consisting not in possessing talents, but in using them aright. If there are Cæsars there, they are such as have conquered themselves, and then conquered evil in the world. If there are Byrons, they have tuned their lyres for Jesus and holiness. Holiness makes each one blessed there. Holiness is the foundation and top-stone of that temple; the light, the atmosphere, the glory, of that world. "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament."

But who are the wise, that are to shine as the bright firmament, with its ever-varying splendors? That brings to our view another feature of heaven. They are the saints of God, gathered from this world. Therefore we are taught that

II. THE PIETY MOST HONORED IN HEAVEN WILL COME FROM THIS EARTH.

This is very wonderful. So is the whole system of redemption. Angels are astonished at it. Its rewards are wonderful. Men who have sinned will be rewarded above angels who have never sinned. Sin is the great evil, and Grace is the great good. And it is God's purpose that where sin hath abounded, Grace shall superabound.

1. Their glory is a reward indirectly to them, directly to Christ.—His sufferings and mediation all have their recompense in man's salvation. Nothing is done directly on their own account ; they are “ saved by grace through faith,” “ for Christ's sake ; ” therefore the glory conferred on them will have peculiar features, expressive of the Father's estimate of Christ's sacrifice. And this will make it seem right in the view of angels ; that they should be thus peculiarly honored, not for their own sake, but for Christ's.

Their piety will have in itself no peculiar excellence above that of angels ; but it will have peculiar relations to the person and work of Christ. United to the Lord God by the peculiar tie of a common nature, regenerated men have had illustrated in their redemption and experience attributes of the Deity not brought into exercise by his treatment of the holy angels. This is a display of sovereign grace in God, to which holy angels will bow alike with reverence and satisfaction. Redeemed men will reflect, as planets, a peculiar glory of God, yet a glory really their own ; they will shine as the firmament.

2. They will appear in a peculiar lustre, as conquerors.

— The angels are represented as fighting. But they never fought an enemy within their own being. They never spent their lives in conflict. They never so taxed the resources of grace as we have. There will be, on the part of the angels, a peculiar admiration for the heroes from this war; a peculiar sympathy. “These are they that have come out of great tribulation,” will be said to every wondering angel, who inquires after their history. Look at a recovered pagan; what a history is his! Look at Saul of Tarsus, and John Bunyan; what histories are theirs! They will shine as the firmament. But the description goes still further.

III. USEFUL PIETY FROM EARTH WILL BE THE BRIGHTEST CREATED OBJECT IN HEAVEN. — “They that turn many to righteousness” are to shine “as the stars, for ever and ever.”

1. *Usefulness is the highest form of human piety.* — I do not mean by this to deny that persons of inferior religious cultivation, and with great imperfections, have not been active, and even useful; and so will, because of their peculiar defect, rank lower in heaven than some who directly affected fewer persons. There are two extremes in sincere believers. There may be an excessive cultivation of personal piety; excessive, by being too exclusive of regard to, or labor for others. And there may be too much outward activity; that is, disproportioned to personal cultivation. But, with these qualifications, I return to state that the height of all cultivation is to grow into useful piety. Love is the crowning

grace. And it has two phases, complacency and beneficence. Take, then, two believers equal in all other respects: one cultivating love as benevolence and beneficence; the other cultivating it mainly as a dormant principle, terminating in good wishes. They would appear in heaven as two lawyers would make their appearance in court: one full of learning, but with no knowledge of practice; the other equally learned with him, but also skilled by practice. Love has its perfection in exercise. It says not "Be ye warmed;" but it warms; and by warming it grows warm. Self-denial will be honored in heaven. The exercise of sentimental love and theoretical love does not disturb our selfishness. They flatter our self-conceit, without taxing our self-love. But, where one has denied himself in order to benefit others, it will be mentioned most honorably in heaven. In fact, that will be the most honored there. It will not be a beautiful piety, that we nursed apart from the wind and storms, from the conflicts and struggles, the miseries and sins, of our poor world, and from our poor fellow-creatures. We may think a great deal of it here, perhaps; and we may be afraid of nothing so much as to impair its dignity by too rude a contact with this rough world. But if you would know how things will seem hereafter, take these tests. What are our feelings in reading history? What type of character stands out to us most glorious? And what part of the lives of good men affects us most? Just where they forgot themselves, and cared for their country, their God, and their kind.

In Paul, what was nobler than this: "We seek not yours,

but you. I will gladly be spent for you ; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." In profane history, what stands out in nobler light than the self-sacrificings exhibited by friendship and by patriotism ? So, no passages of any life, read in heaven, will appear more brilliant than those in which self was most renounced for the good of others.

This, too, is most Christ-like. As love places him, as man, by right, at the head of the moral empire, or kingdom of God, so men will rank under him, by the same principle. And, moreover, practical love develops the highest kind of wisdom, the highest form of strength ; strength of intelligence, of will, of mere affection, not being comparable to that strength which prevails with God, to give salvation to others ; and with man, to persuade him to obey God. All other wisdom, now so renowned, will, in heaven's meridian, holy light, shrink into insignificance.

Many think that humility never can be consistent with being praised for our good qualities. But it is certain that their view is at least incomplete. Paul praised. Moses praised even himself. The Lord will praise the saints in the judgment. In heaven, everything will be estimated aright. We will know exactly what others think of us ; and each will "think soberly" himself, "according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

2. *Their own blessedness, too, will be the greatest.* — The useful will shine in the brightness of a peculiar happiness. Theirs will be the joy of seeing those saved for whom they cared. Fathers and mothers can know this joy only by

knowing this solicitude. Pastors will possess it; missionaries and teachers, too. It is the morning that dawns after a dark and dreary night in a wilderness. It is the glorious sunshine that follows a storm; the harvest after a seed-time of sorrow. Theirs is the joy of seeing the fruit of their labors. Washington must have been the happiest man on earth, so far as temporal good can satisfy, when he resigned his commission, and felt that he had saved his country. No joy of conquest, no satisfaction of ambition or avarice, was ever to compare with the depth and purity of his joy, the glory that encircled his brow.

What treasures of joy is every weeping laborer now laying up in heaven! Theirs is the joy of receiving the love and gratitude of those whom they have saved. The expressions of the Bible are very bold. The power of converting the soul is alone in God; but it speaks of men converting others. In the text, in Hebrew, it is not "turning many to righteousness," but "making many righteous."

We can conceive of no blessedness greater than that of a society made up as heaven is. All have been alike redeemed by Christ. There he is at the head of the state; not by mere right, or power; not only as king or father, but as Saviour to all. Then all are bound together by this tie. One can say to another, "You brought me here."

Perhaps natural relationships will enhance the blessedness of heaven to those who are faithful in them. A patriarch, with his children and his children's children there, will be a glorious sight.

Let us, then, cease complaining that so little is revealed to us about heaven. We know enough of heaven to reach it. That is more than Columbus knew of the highway to this continent. We know enough of heaven to animate us to most earnest desires. He probably knew altogether less about this continent. And yet what he knew kept him earnest in the midst of discouragements, calm under disappointments, cheerfully sacrificing any immediate comfort, or any amount of wealth, that he might reach this far-off, unknown world.

The world's wisdom, at best, is short-sighted.—Take the most sound and judicious man of the world. He counsels others, and he acts on it, to regard piety as secondary. He virtually says : “ Neglect to promote the highest good of other men ; omit opportunities of obtaining true grandeur and glory for yourself ; count converting souls to Christ folly ; nay, despise it.” And yet he is counted very wise ! He comes to his death-bed, cut off from both worlds. He has planted no seed that will grow in heaven. He is losing the present world ; and he has blessed no soul, to bless him in heaven. The business of life is, to prepare for heaven, and to take others there.

The study of the modes of usefulness is one of the most important branches of human pursuit.—It is a study ; and the most useful men have studied it earnestly. Nor is there any patent, stereotyped way of doing good. Each must learn for himself how to be useful in his own sphere. Each must be an original. Do any ask what there

is to be learned? We may reply, you must learn how to become holy; and how to draw others to holiness by example; you must learn how to teach, to persuade by books, by letters, by conversation; you must learn how to pray, and to combine with others. It is much for any one to learn just what he is fitted to do.

Believers can afford to wait, to toil, and to suffer.—The glory that awaits them is an infinite compensation. Their “light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”





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